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**SCANDINAVIAN MONOGRAPHS**

**VOLUME IV**

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**THE HEROIC LEGENDS OF DENMARK**



**ESTABLISHED BY NIELS POULSEN**

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# **THE HEROIC LEGENDS OF DENMARK**

**BY  
AXEL OLRİK**

**TRANSLATED FROM THE DANISH  
AND REVISED IN COLLABORATION WITH THE AUTHOR**

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**TO THE MEMORY OF**  
**SOPHUS BUGGE**  
**AND**  
**MOLTKE MOE**



## AXEL OLRİK (1864–1917)

**I**T is safe to say that nowhere else has there been so intense and widely diffused an interest in “popular antiquities” as in Denmark. The very dearth, comparatively speaking, of the grander architectural remains of bygone ages seems to have concentrated attention on the less conspicuous and more lowly relics of the grey Prehistoric Past and the gay Middle Ages. And, as it happens, Denmark is especially rich in just these things.

An immense stimulus was given this study of native antiquities by the century-long struggle for Slesvig, which served to sharpen the historic sense of the Danes as nothing else did. And when, after the short-lived victory of 1848, there came the catastrophe of 1864 — the desperate and hopeless conflict with Austria and Prussia, from which the little kingdom emerged still further reduced in size, humiliated, and with its very existence at the mercy of an aggressive and immensely stronger neighbor — the national consciousness of the people was turned by its leaders to dwell still more fondly on the great past: not in order to dream idly of its glories, but to emulate it, to cherish the native

love of the soil, to brace up an endangered self-respect.

Folklore and the allied branches of study furnished one of their chief tools. In this ideal endeavor of the latter half of the nineteenth century one figure dominates — Svend Grundtvig, great son of a great father, whose magnificently conceived collection of the “Old Ballads of Denmark,” a repertory of the song of all the North, put the study of ballads on a new footing. To characterize this work, it is sufficient to state that there is no undertaking of contemporary European scholarship which rivals it in sagacity and scope; with the possible exception of our own Child’s “English and Scottish Popular Ballads” — itself patterned after Grundtvig’s work — which has been called the greatest single achievement of literary scholarship in America. To appreciate the bearing of this collection on the national consciousness it must be borne in mind that the ballad and folksong is the most notable literary achievement of the middle ages in Denmark; in fact, constitutes its most precious legacy to later times. Moreover, Denmark is justly proud of having first collected, printed, and studied them. At a time when the remainder of civilized Europe looked down on such “raw” products of the popular mind, Vedel at the request of the Danish queen had edited and printed a hundred ballads (1591).

At Grundtvig's death his disciple, Axel Olrik, then only twenty-five years of age, was given the conspicuous honor of bringing the work to completion. Reared in easy circumstances, in a highly cultured family distinguished for its many gifted members, Olrik was early fired with enthusiasm for the literature and the lore of the Sagas and Eddas. He could not have begun studies in his chosen field under more auspicious circumstances than at the University of his own native city Copenhagen, and at a time when humanistic studies flourished as never before. He opened his literary career with an investigation on the Age of the Edda, which won him the Gold Medal of the University. The arduous work on Grundtvig's collection, unremittingly pursued in the following years (vol. v, 1890, *Kjæmperiser*; continued by vols. vi-viii, *Ridderviser*), by no means monopolized his strength; for in 1892-1894 there appeared his significant doctoral dissertation on the "Sources of Saxo Grammaticus." In it he had set himself the task to distinguish between newer and older layers, as well as between native Danish tradition and West Scandinavian Viking tales, and especially between the historical foundation of legends and their poetical elaboration, in the *Gesta Danorum*. His results were important. For the first time it was shown that much of Saxo's matter betrays distinct traces of Norwegian origin, but that there



is, likewise, a body of sound, native tradition which allows one to glimpse the contents of the earliest Danish literature.

Having successfully demonstrated this native element in Saxo, Olrik proceeded to collect, from other sources as well, for what was to be his magnum opus — *Danmarks Heltedigtning*, an exhaustive critical history of Denmark's heroic poetry. In it are rehabilitated Denmark's claims to an honorable place in the earliest literature of the Germanic races, from which it had been thrust out when the West Scandinavian origin of the Eddic Songs was definitely established. Of the scope and appeal of this great work the present volume (the original, 1903) will give an indication. Volume ii, 1911, of equal importance, treats of "Starkath and the Younger Scyldings." Volume iii, dealing with "The Bravalla Battle and Harold Wartooth," was in active preparation at the time of his death and will no doubt yet appear.

Along with this life work there went a steadily increasing output of articles on matters philological, folkloristic, and mythological (contributed to Scandinavian, English, and German periodicals, but chiefly to *Dania* and its successor, *Danske Studier*, founded by him and Marius Kristensen). Among them may be mentioned the weighty treatises, some of book size, on the Loki Myth, on

Norse and Lappish Cults, on Ragnarök, on the Thundergod and his Servant, on Epic Laws in Popular Poetry. When cut off in the prime of life he was laying the foundation of a great volume on Eddic Mythology for the series of Mythologies of All Nations.

Olrik's abounding enthusiasm and energetic personality made him prominent in a number of undertakings both to stimulate the study of popular antiquities and to render its results accessible to the widest possible circles. Thus he was for many years the untiring director of the great folklore collections in the Royal Library at Copenhagen and the soul of that remarkable undertaking founded to illustrate the life of the people in the past, the Dansk Folkemuseum. The international enterprise of the Folklore Fellows soon had in him one of their moving spirits. Few gift books have been more welcome to Danish youth than his admirable collections of fairy tales and legends; and his golden little book on the "Cultural Life in the North during the Viking Period and the Early Middle Ages" — an example of "popular science" glorified — has become a favorite both with the general reader and the professional student. Endowed with an earnest, though not brilliant, eloquence, he was frequently called upon, especially during the stirring first years of the War, to lecture

to audiences of teachers, soldiers, and workingmen. His last series of lectures was given during a stay in Kristiania as exchange professor.

In the course of his investigations into the life of folklore, Olrik is on the whole inclined to subscribe to the Migration Theory, as against the autochthonous origin of myths. Thus, in his remarkable studies on the Ragnarök legends and the complex Loki myths, which led him far afield, he arrived at the conclusion that the theory of a common "Aryan" origin of folklore themes is untenable. But, in contrast to earlier scholars, he holds that these traditions have for the most part taken their rise, not in ancient India, but rather in the table-lands and valleys of what, culturally, is the cradle of the white race—western Asia. According to him, the Prometheus-Loki legends are demonstrably localized in the Caucasus; the Gog and Magog-Fenriswolf theme in the Elburz Mountains; the widely spread conception of the destruction of the world by fire and its rejuvenation, and the battle between the gods of Good and Evil, in Avestan Persia.

By no means lacking imagination, but cautiously restraining it, Olrik broke decisively with the procedure of beginning with speculations about the "fundamental" idea of a myth. It is only after carefully examining the material with respect to its geographic, ethnic, and cultural aspects; after ascertaining its inner characteristics and type; and

after mapping all available evidences of the occurrence and spread of the individual themes — only then is he ready to hazard a guess as to its meaning. His treatment of the Quern Song is a case in point.

But while his “method” may be followed by others, few have been granted his poetic gift for uniting the results of his critical investigations into a rounded, æsthetically satisfying, whole; nor his lyric-dramatic genius for unrolling before us the grand vistas of the rise and fall of ancient nations, and for conjuring up before our eyes the glamour and the pomp of dead generations. It is a poetic achievement of the first order to have added, in the Biarkamal, a new Eddic Song, with the house-carls’ glee at the court of “the most splendid hero in all the North” as its national Danish background. It is not too much to expect that by his kindling enthusiasm there may be aroused, as in his own country, so also in ours, a greater reverence and understanding of what is too often ignorantly and superciliously called the childhood of the race.

The present translation was — most gladly — undertaken at the suggestion of the American-Scandinavian Foundation. During its progress I had the constant help of the author, who also read the rough draft of the MS. in its entirety. He is,

therefore, responsible for all the opinions advanced; even though, in a not inconsiderable number of instances, active collaboration with the author has led to both minor and major changes. The book thus being revised to a large extent, it was not feasible to add running references to the original. It is hoped, however, that the list of parallel chapters will be of some aid for reference.

In the matter of transliteration and spelling, I have in general followed the procedure of Professor Schofield in his translation of Bugge's "The Home of the Eddic Poems." I quote: "(1) In words not italicized, *ð* and *þ* are replaced by *th*, the sounds represented by this combination of letters in English being the same as those it stands for in Old Norse (and Anglo-Saxon). (2) The ending *-r* (*-l*, *-n*) of the nominative case has been dropped, except in words ending in *-ir*, where the *-r* has been retained to avoid confusion with words ending in *-i* (like *Helgi*): thus *Gunnar*, *Thorstein*, *Egil*, *Hothbrodd*, *Fenrir* . . ."; but I spell *Othin*, *Thor*, *Sigurth*, *Guthrun*, etc., in conformity with modern English practice. Length-signs are given only in italicized forms. *q* (pronounced *aw*) represents the *u*-umlauted *a*.

According to the express wishes of the author, the term *Norn* (Old Norse *Norræn*) has been consistently employed, instead of the clumsy "Old West Scandinavian," for Norway and the settlements in

the West — Iceland, the Faroes, Orkneys, etc. I hope the objection will not be raised that Norn is the name of the now extinct Norwegian dialect of the Shetland Islands. It is used in contradistinction, on the one hand, to the more general Old Norse, Northern, Scandinavian; and to Old Danish, Swedish, etc., on the other. Likewise in conformity with the author's views, the term *Gautar* is used for the ancient inhabitants of the present Swedish provinces of Øster- and Vester-Götland; for the *Geatas* of Beowulf may not be identical. The Anglo-Saxon form of names has been retained when referring more particularly to the Old English poems.

As this translation is primarily to reach students not conversant with Old Norse and the modern Scandinavian tongues, translations have been given in each case (except, for patent reasons, in the chapter on materials for the reconstruction of the Biarkamal). They are mine unless otherwise indicated.

I welcome the opportunity to thank Dr. H. G. Leach, the secretary of the American-Scandinavian Foundation, for his indefatigable editorial helpfulness and generous advice. My rendering is also distinctly the better for the penetrating criticism of Professor W. W. Lawrence and W. H. Schofield who were kind enough to look through typical

portions of the proof. To my colleagues and friends, Professors Fr. Klæber, W. E. Leonard, and J. E. Olson, I owe valuable suggestions. It affords me pleasure to express my sincerest appreciation to the officers of the Carlsberg Fund and the American-Scandinavian Foundation whose farsighted idealism made this volume possible.

L. M. H.

*University of Wisconsin,  
February, 1919.*



# CONTENTS

	PAGE
<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>I. DENMARK DURING THE MIGRATION OF NATIONS</b>	<b>12</b>
1. Danish Kings in Anglo-Saxon Poems. 2. The Danes about the year 500. 3. The Naming-Custom of the Migration Period. 4. The Scylding Feud; Hrothulf; Unferth.	
<b>II. THE BIARKAMAL</b>	<b>66</b>
1. Traces of History in the Biarkamal. 2. A Restoration of the Biarkamal. 3. Hrolf's Warriors. 4. Biarki, Hrut, Hoeking. 5. Hialti, Skuld.	
<b>III. THE BIARKAMAL (<i>continued</i>)</b>	<b>151</b>
1. Othin in the Biarkamal. 2. The Housecarls' Death and Later Fame. 3. Later History of the Biarkamal. 4. The Home of the Biarkamal. 5. The Icelandic Text. 6. Name, Structure, and Style of the Biarkamal.	
<b>IV. LEGENDS OF HROLF'S WARRIORS</b>	<b>217</b>
1. Hialti. 2. Biarki and Agnar. 3. Viggi. 4. Biarki and Beowulf. 5. The Names of Hrolf's Warriors.	
<b>V. LEGENDS OF THE RACE OF HALFDAN</b>	<b>261</b>
1. Helgi and Yrsa. 2. The Birth of Skuld. 3. Hroar, Helgi and Hroerek. 4. The Childhood of Helgi and Hroar. 5. Hrolf's Visit to Athisl. 6. The Epithet "kraki."	
<b>VI. THE ROYAL RESIDENCE AT LEIRE</b>	<b>324</b>
1. The Royal Residence of the Heroic Lays and the Testimony of the Monuments. 2. The Local Tradition. 3. Solution of the Problem by the Evidence of Tradition.	

<b>VII. HROLF'S BERSERKERS</b>	<b>348</b>
1. The Berserkers on the Visit to Athisl. 2. The Berserker Troop and their Names. 3. Bothvar's Bearish Origin and Nature. 4. Svipdag and Hvitserk.	
<b>VIII. SCYLD</b>	<b>381</b>
1. Scyld as Progenitor of the Royal Race. 2. Scyld on the Ship. 3. Scyld and Scaef. 4. Northern Scylding Legends of the Death Journey by Ship. 5. The Journey to the Realms of the Dead. 6. The Swan-Knight and Ingvi. 7. Danish Hero Legends of Scyld. 8. Scyld as the Son of Othin. 9. The Origin of the Scyld Legend.	
<b>IX. THE PEACE OF KING FROTHI</b>	<b>446</b>
1. King Frothi and his Gold Mill. 2. Frothi the Dragon Slayer (The Viking Saga of Frothi).	
<b>X. THE OLDER LINE OF THE SCYLDINGS</b>	<b>477</b>
1. The "Older" and the "Younger" Scyldings. 2. The Genesis of the List of Kings.	
<b>CONCLUSION</b>	<b>484</b>
1. The Home of the Hrolf Cycle. 2. A Retrospect.	
<b>APPENDIX</b>	<b>508</b>
The Sources of the Legends. Table of Parallel References.	
<b>INDEX</b>	<b>511</b>

# THE HEROIC LEGENDS OF DENMARK

## INTRODUCTION

**W**HENEVER scholars have studied the legends about the prehistoric Danish kings, in an attempt to combine them into a connected narrative, they have met with almost insuperable difficulties. Chronology, relationship, scenes, and political conditions have proved to be in the most confusing disorder. Sometimes the legends have even lacked the consistency often found in the fairy tale, where a certain course of events and certain characters associated with it may be handed down for hundreds and thousands of years. That which has figured, in one source, as the chief event in the life of a hero may, in another, be absent or of no significance; and, correspondingly, the characters of even the main personages may be radically different.

The only possible way to arrive at a clear conception is to plunge down into the multitude of traditions and the chaos of contradictions in order to evolve from them the law of change that determines the growth of legends; that is, to find which elements change and which remain.

The causes of change are found in the very form our forefathers used in relating the stories about their earliest kings. It was the poetic form; to be more definite, the short lay. The small narrative poems characteristic of the North depict the course of events with short, quick, energetic strokes. They often approach the dra-

## 2 THE HEROIC LEGENDS OF DENMARK

matic form; and, because of their briefness, merely hint at incidents which a more epic mode of presentation would elucidate in all their details. As it is, the events leading up to the scenes described, as well as the later development of the story, are supposed to be known, while the entire political and historical situation must be gathered from a number of other lays. So long as a large number of contemporary lays are preserved, they explain one another, but as soon as most of the lays are forgotten, only one or a few of the best being preserved, it is no longer to be expected that a following generation will have the key to every allusion. That which is not explained is then guessed at, and, as a consequence, new legends or new lays arise; or, at any rate, decided changes occur in the old line of thought. We may, for instance, see a hero's epithet or an indication of his exploits go from lay to lay, unchanged in external appearance, but interpreted in an altogether different way. These changes are negligible within the same district or the same generation, but after the heroes of the Migration Period have lived for half a thousand years in popular tradition, the legends related of them have been transplanted into different soils and have grown into different shapes. Even within the Scandinavian territory the distances are great enough to exert a strong influence for change. A lay or a legend may be torn from its old associations by a single wrench, through the fact that new audiences are to fill in its allusions and fit it into their own experiences. A similar shifting, of course, takes place when single figures from the Gothic and German cycles are transplanted to Scandinavian soil.

The process may be defined more clearly by a concrete example of a short phrase to which different conceptions have been attached at divers places and times. A lay from the cycle dealing with the Danish royal race of the Siklings contains the lines: "There came the gray-haired Hildebrand, the Hunnish warrior."

þá kom enn hári  
Hildibrandr  
Húnakappi.

The fact that he is called "the Hunnish warrior" is explained in the saga by the account of how the Huns select him — though a stranger — to be the champion of their people in single combat. The adjective "gray-haired" is more curious in this connection; for, judging from his actions, he seems rather to be at the very height of his strength. But Hildebrand is known also in an altogether different connection, in the German legends centering about Dietrich von Bern. As applied in these legends, the epithet "gray-haired Hunnish warrior" gives a clear meaning, though, to be sure, one quite different from that in the Norse lay. The old East Frankish lay of Hildebrand, which is older than any Norse poem that has come down to us, tells his whole history: he has been driven from Italy together with his lord and king, and they have been obliged to seek protection in the royal castle of the Huns. The exiles have already participated in many wars on the side of the Hunnish king, when Hiltibrant, in one of these battles, meets his own son. The father is addressed as an "elderly man," an "old Hun" (*alter Hûn*), and has been thought dead a long time. This, then, is the description in the

#### 4 THE HEROIC LEGENDS OF DENMARK

oldest sources, and the line of thought is so simple that we can have no doubt of seeing here the conditions that gave rise to the epithet "gray-haired Hunnish warrior." Northern skalds borrowed this strong warrior figure, but they did not take over the background, consisting of King Dietrich's exile and long wars. "Gray-haired" and "Hunnish warrior" were allowed to remain as giving a vivid characterization. The first might possibly fit his appearance here; the second was productive of a new legend about Hildebrand's single combats, since the proper background had been lost.

It was particularly to an understanding of the lays that the new audiences lacked the key. This condition became the incentive to the growth of new legendary lore, as I may show still more plainly by another example, that of the legend about Starkath's many arms. Saxo relates that Starkath was born a giant with six arms, but that Thor tore off four, so that he kept only two and thus gained a more human shape. This legend should, no doubt, be connected with a passage in a Norwegian or Icelandic lay, the *Víkarsbálk*, where Starkath is introduced as complaining of the king's men who mock his ugly exterior: "They imagine they see on me the marks of eight arms from the time Hlorrithi (Thor), north of the mountain, tore off Hergrimsbani's arms.\* One is inclined to believe that Saxo and the *Vikarsbalk* are referring here to the same event and the same person; and yet the saga containing the *Vikarsbalk*

\* Séa þykkjask þeir  
á sjölfum mér  
jötunkuml  
átta handa,

er Hlórriði  
fyr hamar norðan  
Hergríms bana  
höndum rænti.

shows an entirely different conception of both: in the saga, Starkath Aludreng is a giant with eight arms, who steals Alfild, the daughter of king Alf of Alfheim (southeastern Norway). The king invokes Thor in order to recover his daughter; and the god kills Starkath and returns Alfild to her father. Soon after, she gives birth to a child, Storverk, whose son, in turn, is Starkath (the famous legendary hero). Only late sources have kept this story, and we find difficulty in reconciling it with the Vikarsbalk, since in the story the eight-armed giant is killed, not merely maimed as in the lay. For very plausible reasons, scholars of our times have declared the conception of Starkath in the Vikarsbalk to be the same as that in Saxo, since both have the famous hero himself born with many arms. And yet this conclusion is altogether erroneous; for the Vikarsbalk describes the hero's life with all details up to this moment without mentioning his killing of Hergrim. Hence he can not, in that source, be called "Hergrim's slayer." The lay gives, moreover, so complete an account of Starkath's various places of sojourn at different times that he can not also have been "fyr hamar norðan," that is, in northern Norway. The only explanation that will fit the Vikarsbalk is, therefore, that the eight-armed "slayer of Hergrim" is an ancestor of the hero speaking in the lay, and that his external peculiarities have left traces in the somewhat etin-like form of his descendant. This legendary motif about the giant Starkath who was overcome by Thor is well known to Norn \*

\* For the meaning of *Norn* as used in this book see Translator's Preface, page xiv.



## 6 THE HEROIC LEGENDS OF DENMARK

lore, being found, for instance, in Iceland in the tenth, thirteenth, and fourteenth centuries, but this story about the giant did not reach the ears of the Danish historian, Saxo. The lay about Starkath's youth, which migrated to Denmark, no doubt contained a stanza resembling the one just quoted from the Vikarsbalk, and Danish story-tellers of the twelfth century (that is, Saxo or his authorities) made up a new legend to explain the passage. As might be expected, the lay sent forth new shoots in the new soil, since the old root-fibres connecting it with the Norn giant-story had been cut.

All transitions contain potential values, not only changes of locality and civilization, but also a shifting of the poetic form. He who has studied the life of the medieval ballads on the lips of the people knows how unchanged they may be handed down, when sung, from generation to generation through the centuries; but whenever an imperfectly remembered ballad is to be rendered in the form of a free narrative, a certain instability comes into its life. New lines of thought are inserted to explain some — possibly quite unimportant — expression. Sometimes a single stanza, if detached from the rest, and allowed to quicken the imagination, may be suggestive of an altogether different action. It was precisely this change in the mode of presentation that took place at the transition to the Middle Ages. At that time, the composition of heroic lays ceased, or was, at best, continued but feebly, whereas the prose narrative became the most important medium for the transmission of legends. This was true in Denmark and, to an even greater degree, in Norway and Iceland with their

rich saga development. We are familiar with the art of the saga, and esteem highly the skill with which the material is moulded so as best to fit its form; we see the ease with which rapid action is unfolded in it (whereas the lay pays more attention to the speeches of the personages), but we are prone to forget the laborious welding together of material that was necessary in order to accomplish the transition from the form of the lay to the structure of the saga.

Side by side with these external, formal, or, as it were mechanical, reasons for change go other impulses originating in the mode of thought peculiar to a certain period or a certain race. When a group of people hear a legend, they will attempt to assimilate it into their own being. They will connect its events with their own homes, adopt its heroes as compatriots, or else invent new persons to figure as national representatives. The tendency toward internal change is equally strong, since the legend is to be amalgamated with a new and different national spirit, is to express new ideals and different tastes.\*

Compare, for example, the Danish and the Norwegian rendering of the same Scylding cycle. The Danish tradition is clear and plastic, with a strong feeling for everyday life, extremely realistic, and a bit jejune, but still

\* Since the above was written (in 1903) the problems of the alterations and the acclimatization of tradition have been more fully discussed by Moltke Moe, *De episke grundlove* (*The Fundamental Epical Laws of Popular Tradition*) in *Edda*, 1914, and by Aarne, *Leitfaden der vergleichenden Märchenforschung* (1913, *FF Communications*, No. 13), c. ii, 23-29: *Die Veränderungen der Märchen*. Cf. my article *Epische Gesetze der Volkdichtung*: *Zs. f. d. Altertum*, li (= *Danske Studier*, 1908, p. 69). A more detailed treatment of the growth of tradition will be found in the author's (forthcoming) book *Method of Legend Research*.

## 8 THE HEROIC LEGENDS OF DENMARK

sensitive and idealistic. The Norwegian conception is imaginative, fantastic, and unrestrained, losing itself in a dream world of the interior of the mountain and the influence of the elemental powers on human life; it is, to some extent, religious, but with sentiments approaching those found in the fairy tale. So marked is the difference between the two sets of traditions, which, strangely enough, met in the same spot at the time when Saxo was writing his history.\*

These considerations suggest, in the main, the method to be followed in an examination of the legends. Every single source, whether recent or ancient, receives an added interest. No distinction is made between genuine and spurious, since both give us the legend as it lived in the mind of some one individual; each one is a link in the development and, however humble, furnishes an opportunity to watch the direction of the current. Once we arrange the diverse representations of a legendary character with close regard to the place, the time, and the form in which he appears, the old chaos will vanish; and in its place we shall have a series of pictures that will allow us to follow the transformation — the gradual assimilation, as it were—which takes place in every successive period.

The causes making for change, whether due to an epic growth or the result of new spiritual forces, are often so tangible that it would be wasted trouble to go long and tortuous ways in order to find them. What is primarily necessary, is to enter fully into the idiosyn-

\* The legendary history of Starkath is the theme of the author's *Danmarks Heltedigtning*, ii (1910).

cracies of one source, and then to find the other sources, whether old or young, that are most closely related to it; always proceeding with the caution that the motif in our own interpretation may already be shifting.\*

The question may be asked whether there really exists sufficient scientific material to carry out this series of pictures as a basis for investigation. In reply I will point to a rich source that has hardly yet been touched. I mean the lays dealing with Danish heroic life and chiefly the lays that Saxo has preserved. I have made them the basis of my examination, and have striven to work out their old form, wherever possible, but no less to grasp their peculiar line of thought, to determine their home and age, and to understand their conception of the legend at hand. On a number of points, we can emancipate ourselves from the common medieval conception and substitute that of the Viking Age (or at least of a period living on the older epic traditions). From this vantage ground I look back, on the one hand, to the older legendary lore, in so far as it is represented by Beowulf or other sources, and, on the other hand, follow the development of the motif down to the medieval sagas and chronicles.

The fact that these earliest sources are but few in number gives all the more importance to the contents

\* The method here employed is to be characterized, rather, as a typology of tradition, carried out on a chronological and geographical basis. It is modelled on the ballad investigations of Svend Grundtvig (in *Danmarks gamle Folkeviser*, in some cases followed in Child's ballad collection). Very much along the same lines are the researches of the Finnish investigators (cf. Aarne, *Leitfaden*, c. iii; and K. Krohn, *Die finnische geographische Methode, Finnisch-Ugrische Forschungen*, x); only the geographical point of view is even more strongly emphasized by me. Cf. my *Method*, etc., above.

## 10 THE HEROIC LEGENDS OF DENMARK

of every single one, and forces the investigator to exert himself to the utmost in order to fathom it in every aspect. He taps and listens like an artisan testing his work; he uses the results of linguistic study to understand every name, and the methods of history and archæology to appreciate every manifestation of life. He separates the solid traditional material from that which is germinating or immature as well as from that which is worn out and disintegrating. He enters into the works of the period until he can divine every half-uttered thought.

The other great point of departure is the geographical distribution of the sources, as we are able to see it now, after the bipartition of Saxo's legends has become common scientific property. We know, in their main features, the forms which the tradition originally common to Denmark, Norway, and Iceland had assumed in each of the three countries about the year 1200. From the sources at hand we may draw conclusions about the older forms of this lore: thus, from the Icelandic chronicles and sagas we conjecture the form of older Icelandic tradition; from the Icelandic and Norwegian sources, what was common Norn tradition; and from the Norn and Danish sources, the common prose tradition of a legend, which, in its turn, may prove to be the link between the individual lay and its various later forms.

The existence of this series of monuments, fixed both as regards time and place, by the aid of which the Danish hero legends may be followed down through the ages, makes them of general importance to scholars; first, in the study of the Teutonic hero legends, which are closely

akin to them in origin, and of which the early poetic forms have been almost entirely lost, and second, in the study of epic poetry in all countries, limited as this so often must be to the latest forms.

To the Scandinavian peoples, however, this lore assumes an increased value as the clear expression of the ideal tendencies of their forefathers, embodying the earliest manifestations of the special gifts of each people and at the same time testifying to their interchange of thought.

## CHAPTER I

### DENMARK DURING THE MIGRATION OF NATIONS

#### 1. DANISH KINGS IN ANGLO-SAXON POEMS

**O**UR earliest information concerning the Danish kings of the oldest times is to be found in English heroic poetry; chiefly in the large epic of *Beowulf*, in the list of kings in the lay of *Widsith*; and, finally, in prose monuments.

It centres almost entirely around a certain group of persons and events, viz., a Danish royal race whose common name is *Scyldingas* and in which *Hróðgár* and *Hróðulf* are the most prominent personages. In the latter, we recognize *Hrolf kraki*, who in later times was the most famous king in Danish heroic tradition, and in the former, *Hroar*. Their kinsmen also are easily identified. A survey of the various accounts will show us which conceptions had most firmly taken root among the Anglo-Saxon poets.

1. *Scyld* (*O. N. Skiöld*) and the *Scylding Family* (introductory lines of *Beowulf*, 1–67). “Lo!” exclaims the poet,

“Lo, praise of the prowess of people-kings  
of spear-armed Danes, in days long sped,  
we have heard, and what honor the athelings won!”\*

Then follows the narrative concerning *Scyld*, who had come to the land as a child, alone, on a royal ship; how

\* F. B. Gummere, *The Oldest English Epic*. New York, 1909. All quotations from *Beowulf* will be made from this translation.

he conquered the peoples round about, and how he departed after his death in the same mysterious manner in which he had come. About his successor (King) *Béowulf* the poem says nothing more than that he is Scyld's son and the father of *Healfdene* —

Healfdene the high, who held through life,  
sage and sturdy, the Scyldings glad.  
Then, one after one, there woke to him,  
to the chieftain of clansmen, children four:  
Heorogar, then Hrothgar, then Halga brave,

and besides, a daughter who was married to the Scylding (the Swedish) king. Unfortunately neither his name nor hers are to be gathered from the manuscript.\*

To Hrothgar was given such glory of war,  
such honor of combat, that all his kin  
[i.e., his devoted countrymen]  
obeyed him gladly till great grew his band  
of youthful comrades.

Then we are told how Hrothgar builds a hall, called Heorot, of unexampled size and magnificence; how this hall is visited by the man-destroying troll, Grendel; and how the monster is driven away by the heroic deed of *Béowulf*, a warrior of the Geats. In a later passage are mentioned Hrothgar's sons, *Hréðric* and *Hróðmund* who are pictured as boys, or as youths with no deed yet to their credit at the time of the action; *Hróðulf*, who occupies the throne together with Hrothgar as his helper or leader in battle, and must be the son of Halga who

\* A strong warning must be uttered against a violent emendation whereby some scholars introduce into this ancient epic the names of Signy and Sævil — persons from the very latest stage of legendary development, the former a figure borrowed from the Sigar cycle!



## 14 THE HEROIC LEGENDS OF DENMARK

has disappeared from the story before the main action of the poem begins; and *Heoroweard*, the son of King Heorogar who had died.

The majority of these persons are recognized as the same who figure in later Scandinavian (Danish and Icelandic) tradition, where they reappear generally in the same relations and, to a certain degree, in the same events. Thus Scyld as the progenitor of the family, the term Scyldings as the common name of the race, Halfdan with the sons Hroar and Helgi, Hrolf as the son of Helgi who had died when still a young man, Hrcerek as Hrolf's opponent, and Hiarwarth as the relative who slays Hrolf. This uniform agreement between Danish and English heroic poetry tends to show that not only is reference made in both to the identical events, but that both presuppose the same poetic interpretation of them, however different the forms these legends took in the course of time. The comparison of the Danish and the English forms of the Lay of Ingiald—to be made presently—will strongly corroborate this view.

Such similarities prove at any rate with absolute certainty that the poet of *Beowulf* did not himself invent these persons and events. To a large extent this follows from the simple fact that he does not, in every case, narrate an event but only refers to the fates of the Scyldings as legendary material his audience is already supposed to know, and to which he needed but to allude. And that not only the material but also the manner of treatment is handed down from older tradition—no doubt shorter lays of the kind we know existed among the vari-

ous peoples of Teutonic race — is seen from the very introductory words of the epic, which sing the praises of the warlike prowess of the Danes. These lines do not accord well with the epic as it now stands, in which the action, to be sure, is carried on in the hall of the Danish kings, but where not one great deed is performed by the Danes themselves. Quite to the contrary, their inglorious inactivity stands out in contrast to the Geatish warrior's heroism which frees the realm of the Danes from the ruinous visitations of the monster. The introductory lines must, then, have belonged to some lay that really treated of the Danish warrior kings.

2. *Ingeld's Marriage* (Beowulf, ll. 2020–2066). When the hero of the poem in his description of the festival in the hall Heorot, after his victory over Grendel, mentions Hrothgar's daughter Freawaru, who is pouring mead for the warriors, he takes occasion to tell her history: An old feud existed between the Danes and their neighbors, the Heathobards (*Heaðobeardan*). In order to end it, *Ingeld*, the son of *Fróda*, the king of the Heathobards, was to marry Hrothgar's daughter; but during the marriage festivities the feud broke out afresh. A young man in the suite of the princess carried a sword that had been taken on the battlefield, which gives an old Heathobard warrior occasion to egg on a young hero (or, the young hero ?, i.e. Ingeld) to revenge himself on the son of the murderer, who has girded himself with that sword. The revenge is taken on the spot. The slayer escapes, but the two nations are enemies again. Ingeld puts away his wife, and hostilities with the Heathobards continue.

## 16 THE HEROIC LEGENDS OF DENMARK

Notwithstanding considerable differences, this scene is essentially like the one described in the Danish Lay of Ingiald, preserved to us in Saxo's sixth book: An old warrior's (Starkath's) egging on moves Ingiald, the son of Frothi, to avenge himself in his own hall on the sons of Sverting, the sons of the slayers of his father, and to put away his wife. The more detailed investigation of the scene in Beowulf belongs, rather, to an examination of the Starkath legends (*Danmarks Heltedigtning*, II). It will suffice to observe here that not a few points, both of the action and in the expression of the passage, have been under discussion. Thus, doubts have been uttered whether Froda fell in the battle against the Danes; whether it is his sword which is borne by the young Dane; and whether it is Ingeld who takes revenge for his father or only one of the rank and file among the Heathobards; and, finally, where the scene of the fight is located. However, these questions are not of decisive importance in determining the rôle of the Scyldings in the struggle against the Heathobards.\*

3. *The Fight in the Hall Heorot* (Beowulf, 81-85). After the description of the hall we are told, with a prophetic glance into the future:

There towered the hall,  
high, gabled wide, the hot surge waiting  
of furious flame. Nor far was that day

\* My thesis that "the young warrior" is not identical with king Ingeld has recently been given support by W. W. Lawrence (*Publications of the Modern Language Association*, 30, 380): "The 'young warrior' can hardly be Ingeld. . . . The old warrior addresses him (2047) as *mín wine*, too familiar for a retainer to his king, and the avenger (*sé ðöer*, 2061) escapes from Ingeld's court, whereupon the king feels his anger rise and his love for his wife diminish."

when father and son-in-law stood in feud  
for warfare and hatred that woke again.\*

The mention of the hall Heorot in connection with the rise of a bloody fight between father-in-law and son-in-law plainly refers to the renewed feud with the Heathobards which blazed up again at the marriage feast of Ingeld. It would seem reasonable to assume that the hall was burned down on that occasion. I shall return to this question later on, as also to the question whether reference is here made to one or several events.

4. *The Fight in the Hall Heorot* (Widsith, 45-49):

Hrothwulf and Hrothgar held the longest  
concord of kin as cousins together  
after they routed the race of Wicings,  
laid prone the pride of the power of Ingeld,  
hewed down at Heorot the Heathobard lines.

There is an unquestionable similarity between this account (4) and the preceding one (3). Both tell of an extraordinarily violent encounter which takes place in this very hall Heorot: the two opponents being, in the one source, Hrothgar and his brother's son Hrothulf, who are pitted against Ingeld the king of the Heathobards; in the other source, the "father-in-law" against his "son-in-law," which (according to (2)) amounts to precisely the same thing. In both sources the battle in Heorot seems to be ended by the victory of the Danes: in (4) we are told this in plain words ("laid prone the

\*

Sele hlífade

héah and horn-géap; heaðo-wylma bád,  
láðan líges. Ne wæs hit lenge þá gén,  
þæt se ecg-hete áþum-swerian  
æfter wæl-níðe wæcnan scolde.

(Concerning the first part of the allusions, cf. below.)

## 18 THE HEROIC LEGENDS OF DENMARK

pride of the power of Ingeld"); in (3) it seems to follow from the course of events, for in heroic tradition it was impossible that a warlike conflict of great dimensions in the royal hall should not lead to decisive results: if the Scylding forces were not annihilated they must have slain all their foes.\* On the other hand, no annihilation of the Danish power is probable, not being evident either in heroic or in historic sources. On the contrary all information points to the Danes having enlarged their sphere of dominion during the Age of Migration. In still another point the two sources agree with one another: a feud of long duration and bitterness seems to have preceded the struggle in Heorot. In (4) it is in no way likely that this battle against the combined forces of the "Vikings" and "Heathobards," was a surprise attack on the royal hall of the Danes, but rather the climax in a long feud. When it is said that Hrothulf and Hrothgar enjoyed a long period of peace, it is likely to have been preceded by a long period of warfare. In (3) also the "wakening" of the feud is probably a re-awakening (just as Gummere translates it), judging not

\* Cf. the Nibelungs slain in Etzel's hall (*Nibelungenlied*); Hamthir and Sqrli who are overcome in Ermanric's hall (*Hamðismál*); the fall of Hrolf and his men in Leire Castle. The battle in the hall of Finnsburg seems an exception since it concludes, not with the annihilation of one host, but with peace. This mixed outcome tallies well with the more historical treatment of many of the episodes in *Beowulf*; but even there the poet shows that he considers the result a victory for the Hocings, who lost only their leader and are imagined as having beaten back the Frisian host. The attending circumstances are different, too: the Hocings use the hall in which they dwell as a fortress. Hence there is greater resemblance to the scenes in the *Nibelungenlied* and in the *Hamðismál*, in which latter the fight occurs, as in the Freawaru episode, at the banquet in the royal hall. With its narrow doorway the Teuton hall of antiquity offered almost no opportunity to escape from the bloodshed within.

only from the similarity of (2) but also from the sudden outburst of hatred.

On the other hand, the contents of (3) are identical with those of (2), the essence of both being that war-hate blazed up between father-in-law and son-in-law (i.e., in connection with Freawaru's marriage). But also account (4) clearly resembles account (2) or, at any rate, the following passage in *Beowulf*. In both Hrothgar, with Hrothulf at his side, sits mighty and victorious on his throne in the hall Heorot, in strong contrast with the time of the feud.

We are justified, then, in concluding that (2) (3) and (4) are accounts of the same event, even if the emphasis is not always laid on the same points and we find slight divergences in the recitals. In (2) the main emphasis is laid on the tragic fate of individuals. There is a detailed description of the effect of the action on the various personages (on Freawaru, on the young warrior, on the old spear-bearer, and on Ingeld himself). In account (3) the note of individual tragedy is touched only in the words "father-in-law and son-in-law," and the emphasis is given rather to the violence of the battle in the royal hall and, perhaps, its ruinous effects on it. The account is, so to say, topographical. In (4), again, the consequences of the battle are stressed: the destruction of the power of the Heathobards. The standpoint is a political one.

The view I have here presented is opposed to that entertained by other investigators. Their view is that we have in these accounts not only a single episode of the Heathobard wars, but the description of the whole

## 20 THE HEROIC LEGENDS OF DENMARK

war with three main episodes: the fall of Frotha (2); the attempt to patch up a peace between the nations by means of Ingeld's marriage with Freawaru (2) and (3); and the final battle at Heorot (4). Against this view we must urge that two separate battles in the royal Danish hall are occurrences too extraordinary to be credible. And their method of composing the conflicting accounts into one great "historical" context (so notorious in recent scientific researches) also here leads to absurdities. During the period of the ravages of Grendel, Hrothgar and Hrothulf sit together on the throne in the hall Heorot. The bloody wedding of Freawaru has taken place (or is to take place ?) about the same time, for the princess enters the royal hall as a young maiden. Then, according to them, the conflict breaks out afresh and lasts for a number of years, ending finally with the second battle in the hall; after this event Hrothgar and Hrothulf once more sit "for a long time" together in Heorot.\*

Certainly, we have here not a series of episodes to be linked together to form an "historical" narrative, but, rather, different variations of a single, tragically inspired episode of the Heathobard feud. Hence the episodical character of the sources, which permits of variations especially in the beginning and the end of the story (the "loose end" of the plot †). The conflict con-

\* Hrothgar, who, according to the account in *Beowulf*, was a senile old man, and Hrothulf, the young and strong defender of the realm, subdued to Hrothgar's overlordship, are in the same position many, many years later!

† Cf. chapter 3 of my (forthcoming) book, *Method of Legend Research*, entitled *Life of the Legend*: "Any tendency to a change of the legend is counteracted by the distinctness with which its individual scenes are impressed on popular consciousness and also by the intimate coherence existing between

stitutes the theme of the episode, the political effects, the "loose end"; which are, in (2) a series of new battles, in (4) the annihilation of the Heathobards. Account (2) is a direct narrative of the marriage and the rekindled hate. In (4) the stress is on the friendship between Hrothulf and Hrothgar (as will be shown presently),\* and the battle in Heorot is only an allusion dating the family story and giving evidence of Hrothulf's prowess; for it lies in the poet's interest to render Hrothulf's war-like exploits as prominent as possible.

5. *A Lay about King Ingeld* (Alcuin's testimony). In a letter written in the year 797 Alcuin warns the priests against listening to players on the harp and "the poems of the Heathen": "When priests dine together let the words of God be read. It is fitting on such occasions to listen to a reader, not to a harpist, to the discourse of the Fathers, not to the poems of the Heathen. What has Ingeld to do with Christ?" † It appears from this that the ancient heroic lays were then being recited, at least during the feastings of the common people, and by gleemen, even if not at court as they originally were meant to be. Also, that one "king Ingeld" is mentioned as specially typical for these recitals. There can be no reasonable doubt that this is the same king Ingeld who is mentioned in the three preceding accounts.

the various features of its action. Least resistance to change is found at the beginning and the end of the legend — the 'loose end of the legend.' Here additions are made with the greatest ease — whether forward or backward in time — but also distinct changes occur at these points because the action is not confined between other given motifs."

\* See below "The Scylding Feud;" also the account (6) given below.

† *Quid Hinioldus cum Christo?* — Chadwick, *The Heroic Age*, p. 41.



6. *The Hróthulf Episode* (Beowulf, ll. 1008–1019; ll. 1159–1187). Here the feast after the fight with Grendel is described: Hrothulf and Hrothgar occupy the high-seat together, at a time when there was still peace among the Scyldings; Hrothgar's two sons, Hrethric and Hrothmund, are seated on the younger warriors' bench. Queen Wealhtheow presents the cup to her husband and expresses the wish that he may rule in happiness and after his death leave the realm to his sons, as she takes it for granted that they will find safe support in the king's nephew Hrothulf. The repeated allusion shows that this condition of peace was interrupted by some internal feud, and we assume unconsciously that the breach of the peace stands in some connection with Hrothulf. The same motif is repeated in Widsith: Hrothulf and Hrothgar resided together in peace, but we have an inkling that this friendly relation finally came to an end. The identical scenes in Beowulf and Widsith argue a related tradition. In fact, the introductory scene common to both is so characteristic that it probably points to one and the same lay as the direct or indirect source of both accounts. We shall return to this characteristic episode in another connection, when we shall deal with it both as a whole and in detail in connection with the Scylding feud.

7. *The King's Son Heoroweard* (Beowulf, l. 2161) is mentioned in passing: Hrothgar in recognition of Beowulf's victory presents the hero with a sword, saying:

A while it was held by Heorogar king,  
for long time lord of the land of the Scyldings;  
yet not to his son the sovran left it,  
to daring Heoroweard — dear as he was to him, etc.

We may conclude, then, that the poet perhaps knew this figure among the Scyldings from some event or other. In Northern tradition Hiarvarth is the thane lusting for power who slays Hrolf in order to ascend the throne himself.

8. *Kings not Belonging to the Scyldings.*

1. The epic knows of only one king of the Danes who does not belong to the Scyldings, Heremod, who is in passing (ll. 898 ff.), described as brave and cruel. A longer account (ll. 1700 ff.) of the manner of his death is so obscure that its interpretation is doubtful, for we possess no other reference to him in legend. There are faint allusions to him also in Scandinavian tradition (especially in the *Hyndluljóð*). The poet of *Beowulf* refers him to the time preceding the appearance of the Scyldings, most probably immediately before Scyld's coming to the land.

2. "Sigehere longest the Sea-Danes ruled" (*Widsið*, l. 28). In him we recognize a ruler famous also in Northern legend, king Sigar, who had Hagbarth hanged and who was slain in revenge by Haki.

3. Alevih (*ibid.*, l. 35) is compared with the Anglo-Saxon Offa in bravery, but his deeds are not spoken of. (His name corresponds to O. N. *Qlvir*; possibly he has become Alf, Sigar's "son" in Danish tradition).

4. The king Ing who "first appeared among the East-Danes" (Runic Poem) is probably to be understood as a royal progenitor.

English tradition thus shows a remarkably detailed picture of the Danish realm and its royal race, as well as of the events that took place in the heroic period, i.e., in the period of the Migration of Nations. The Danes appear as the chief branch of the race to which the poet belongs. No other people occupies a like place in the heroic traditions of the Anglo-Saxons. The great extent of the Danish realm is emphasized by the varying appellations "Spear-Danes," "East-Danes," "North-Danes." The designation "Sea-Danes" in *Widsith*

proves them to have been a maritime nation. We learn more definitely from the introduction of Beowulf that "the folk, both far and near, who house by the whale-path, heard (Scyld's) mandate." The poet evidently pictures to himself the realm of the Danes as an island kingdom and as having been founded by the progenitor Scyld. As the central point of this realm the poet imagines the royal hall Heorot (i.e., "stag," probably because it loomed up over other buildings as does the stag over all animals of the forest) whose size and magnificence he describes as unequalled, whose ruler excels through his generosity, and whose host of warriors is growing both in numbers and bravery. Of its location we know only that it was situated near the sea (Beowulf). Its frequent mention (e.g., also in the brief descriptions of Widsith) argues it not to be the invention of one poet only.

The picture of the kingdom of the Danes conveys but vaguely the conception of its large extent. No historic account of it is furnished; it is merely a background for the mighty events that occur there.

Attempts have been made to find more definite information in a particular place name; but a closer examination shows that it cannot be made to yield political information. It is said about Scyld's son that "far flew the boast of him in the Scandian lands" (*Scedelandum in*); the sword of the monster is placed into the hand of Hrothgar, "the most fortunate of those who by the two seas scattered treasures on the Scandian island" (*þára þe on Scedenigge sceattas dælde*). The poet's intention is not to call these Scylding kings the most fortunate in

the Danish realm — which would, indeed, be but small praise — but in a considerably larger territory, Scedeland being not the Scaney (Scania) of later Danish tradition, the province west of the Sound, but the Sca(n)dinavia or Scandia of classical antiquity, that is to say, the entire Scandinavian peninsula, with the addition probably, in the poet's mind, of the territory of the Danes and other kindred nations.\* The same is true of the expression "between two seas," used in the same connection, which in the poet's mouth most likely is an expression for all the lands of heroic legends.

The general conception of a Danish kingdom is left a vague one, being merely a spacious background for the hall Heorot, which is the only real scene of action and the setting not only for Beowulf's fantastic fight (which contains many elements of the poet's own invention), but also for all the Scylding episodes: the marriage, Hrothgar's and Hrothulf's peaceful joint regency, and the ensuing struggle. The hall is the heroic expression for the greatness of the Danish rule, just as the splendid royal hall of Jarmunrik is the symbol for that king's Ostrogothic empire.

A bare hint of the extent of the Danish realm may be detected in the fact that *Vendla léod* (i.e. the ruler of the people of Vendil dwelling in the northernmost part of the Jutish peninsula) appears at the Danish court. In the same manner, according to Widsith, a consider-

\* The linguistic identity of Scandinavia = *Scodentig* with the later *Skáney* = Skåne is generally taken for granted by investigators; but this is not necessarily semantic identity. Moreover, Hj. Lindroth has recently (in *Namn och Bygd*, iii, 10 ff.) urged some weighty objections against the phonological development Sca(n)dinavia > Skáney.

able number of neighboring princes appear in the hall of Ermanric.

If the poet has a severely schematic conception of the extent of the Danish rule he seems to possess all the more insight into the history of the Danes during the reign of the Halfdan dynasty. He appears to be familiar with all the members of the royal family during three generations and with its political and inner history. He is acquainted with all details of the protracted struggle with the Heathobards, the attempt at reconciliation and its failure. Widsith knows about the end of this struggle; also that *wícingas* (or, rather, the *Wícingas*) belong to the Heathobards; that is to say, they are a people attacking the Danes from the sea side, which agrees with the view of Heorot as the capital of the Danish maritime state. Still more astonishing is the poet's acquaintance with the individual members of the royal house, their age, and their whole environment. It is as if we had an almost contemporaneous narrative before us.

At the same time the completeness of the account is but apparent. The fact is that the poet seems to know nothing about the events of the Heathobard feud preceding the bloody marriage feast. He has nothing to say about Healfdene's participation, and it is, to say the least, not certain whether he knows the manner of Froda's death. At any rate he is not acquainted with the details of his story. And after the bloody marriage festival we are told no more about the feud.

A single, notable scholar to whom Beowulf study is under deep obligation, Karl Müllenhoff, has strongly insisted on the historical character of the poem, main-

taining that the complete details of the feud could be traced in the Anglo-Saxon sources. However, it will hardly do to deny that the marriage and the battle in Heorot are one and the same event. In the matter of political consequences the traditions (or else the poets) do not agree: in *Beowulf* this fight is regarded as the beginning of fresh struggles, whereas in *Widsith* it marks the destruction of the power of the Heathobards. As to the poetical sources it makes much less trouble to look at the question from another point of view: the only thing all accounts have in common is the interest in the scenes of tragic import. In other words, the historic information of these poems is solely dependent on heroic lays.

The same holds true with respect to the happenings inside the family of the Scyldings: Healfdene's life is not known — *Beowulf* covers the failure of tradition on this point by poetic commonplaces. On the other hand the circumstances of Hrothulf are known only in so far as they are the cause of the conflicts during the next generation: his dependence on his foster-father Hrothgar and his warlike prowess, the weaker position of the young princes, and the slighting of Heorowearð. The only seeming exception in this consistent poetic economy is formed by the marriage of Hrothgar's sister (*Elan*?) with a Swedish king (*elan*? *Onela*?). It is possible, however, that this episode concerns not so much the Danish as the Swedish royal house (with which the poet of *Beowulf* is fully acquainted); or, possibly, we have here a motif which is more fully developed in Hrothulf's history, known to us only by vague allusions. Hrolf

## 28 THE HEROIC LEGENDS OF DENMARK

kraki, his correspondent in Northern tradition, has, through the marriage of his mother Yrsa to king Athisl, a 'rather intimate connection with Swedish royalty.

Taken in their entirety, then, these accounts about the family of the Scyldings point not to connected historic information, but to their being based on some few lays with circumscribed action, embracing Ingeld's marriage, Hrothgar's and his sons' relations to Hrothulf, and the relation of Hrothulf to Heoroweard.

The inference is that Beowulf presents no historical raw material, so to say, but rather historical matter which has been subjected to poetic treatment or, at any rate, is poetically selected. This does not exclude the possibility that its contents may agree with the historic truth. Only, a special investigation becomes necessary to determine in how far the picture thus given by the poem is to be accepted or discredited.

### 2. THE DANES ABOUT THE YEAR 500

The picture of the events and of the political and national conditions of the North as presented in the Anglo-Saxon lays, seems to agree fairly well with the historic truth — naturally, with the exception of the legendary exploits of Beowulf himself. On this point, at all events, the great majority of modern investigators are agreed.\*

Several reasons have been given for believing in the trustworthiness of these ancient poems: 1. First of all the intrinsic character of the accounts themselves. The political events are represented with all the variety of

\* Cf., e.g., Chadwick, *The Heroic Age* (1912), c. IV. This conception was emphasized earliest and most strongly by Müllenhoff (*Beowulf*, 1891); Hygelac's historicity had been demonstrated already by N. F. S. Grundtvig.

real life, the legends having, as yet, not been arranged so as to serve for the glorification of some few favorite heroes. On the contrary, the whole people is engaged in the struggle and occupies a large part of the interest of the poet; whereas the legendary narratives — as well as Teutonic heroic poetry in general at the time of its highest development — take greater liberties by showing more interest in the individual heroes. In *Beowulf* and *Widsith*, on the other hand, the details of warfare engage our attention by the side, or even instead of, the unravelling of the tragic plot. In this regard, then, a number of the scenes in *Beowulf* have a character of their own as against the bulk of heroic poetry of the Teutonic race.\*

2. The general trustworthiness of *Widsith* (and, to some degree, of *Beowulf*) as to historic and ethnographic information has been confirmed by comparison with the statements of classic authors about the Teutonic tribes.

3. In the case of *Beowulf* one may, in one instance, and in regard to a small single detail, see its astonishing exactness in preserving an historic fact. The Frankish chronicles report that King Huggleik (*Chochilaicus*, *Beowulf's Hygelác*) — a king of the Geatas, or a “rex Danorum” — fell on a viking expedition to the land of

\* Even Andreas Heusler, who is, on the whole, so little inclined to find historic elements in heroic poetry, makes an exception in the case of Hygelac's fall, “*der inhalt eines zeitgedichts mehr als eines heldenliedes*” (*Geschichtliches und mythisches in der germanischen heldensage, Sitzungsbericht der preuss. Akad.*, 1909, 920–945). The same is true of a great number of the “Geatish” events and, to some degree, of other scenes in *Beowulf*. As to the character of the real heroic lays compare the well-known books of Ker (*Epic and Romance*, 2d ed., 1908), Heusler (*Lied und Epos*, 1907), and Hart (*Ballad and Epic*).



the Hetvarii (*pagus Attuatorum*) near the mouth of the Rhine, when he was surprised by a Frankish army. This happened in 512-20 A.D., most likely in 516. It would seem to follow on the one hand, that the other political events also must be fairly exactly reported; and, on the other, that they are likely to belong to the same period; for Hygelac's death is important as an event of the utmost consequence in the inner fates of the Geatish kingdom and its relations with the Swedes. These events again are in various ways connected with the history of the Scyldings.

Assuming 516 as the date for Hygelac's death, we shall be correct in regarding 500, or somewhat later, as the time when the author of *Beowulf* makes the main action of the poem take place in the royal hall of the Danes. The reigns of Healfdene, Heorogar, and, partly, of Hrothgar would then occupy the last part of the fifth century, that of Hrothulf would come in the first half of the sixth. Roughly, this chronology will probably correspond to the historic truth.\*

On one point the poem agrees absolutely with the chronicles of the period in question: it is exactly at this time that the Danes, thanks to their warlike strength,

\* Heusler, *Zeitrechnung im Beowulfepos* (*Archiv für das studium der neueren sprachen und litteraturen*, 1910, 9-14) attempts to establish the chronology in greater detail: 495 Healfdene's death, Hrothulf's birth, and Heorogar's death; 490-500, Halga's death, Hrethric's and Hrothmund's birth; 510, Beowulf's fight with Grendel in the hall Heorot; 510-515, Ingeld's marriage; 520, Hrothgar's death, Hrothulf's and Hrethric's struggle for the crown. In this attempt he disregards the statements of the poem which assign a much longer reign to Hrothgar, as this is difficult to harmonize with the relative position of the other persons. — As for myself, I feel less impelled to establish a chronology laying claim to objective truth, knowing as I do that the legends change nothing more readily than time, so as to suit their inner economy (cf., e.g., my article on "Sivard digri," *Sagabook*, 1910, 17 f.).

assume a position of leadership which was unknown in former times. We possess from the days of the earlier Roman emperors some rather detailed information concerning the population of these lands. The Jutish peninsula was occupied by eight tribes of which the Saxons were the southernmost, the Cimbri and the Charudes the northernmost. The names of the latter two are preserved in the names of the two shires on the south side of the Limfjord, Himbræ sysæl (Himmerland), and Harthæ sysæl). The Scandinavian peninsula was occupied by one great kingdom, that of the Swedes, formidable through its army and its navy. Among the other tribes the two southernmost are the Guti (Gauti ?) and the Daukiones (which latter name has, with very slight reason, been considered as, possibly, a scribe's mistake for the name of the Danes). With certainty we know only that a powerful Danish kingdom such as existed in the period of the Migration of Nations had not yet arisen at the beginning of our era or the first century afterwards. Then follow several centuries during which the North is withdrawn from the observation of Roman authors; and when the Migration again brought the races of the North into touch with the races of the South the Danes are seen to be one of the great powers of that time, known from the year 500 in Greece, Italy, and France. Thus we hear shortly before 513 of a troop of Heruli who decide to leave southern Europe and return to the northern home of their people: they march through northern Germany, then through "the tribes of the Danes" (note the plural, which seems to indicate a plurality of peoples answering to the name of Danes!),

and finally they arrive in the land of the Gautar and are assigned dwellings among them.\* Another southern historian mentions, in somewhat forced language, the defeat and expulsion of the Heruli by the Danes as the basis of the Danish fame.† Authority for both these pieces of information was, probably, that king Rodulf who left his Norwegian kingdom to serve under Theodoric, the famous ruler of the Ostrogoths (about 500, or a little later).

A third witness to the fame of the Danes are the Frankish Chronicles, which call Huggleik King of the Danes (*Danicum rege suo nomine Chochilaico*, Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, iii, 3); for the very fact that this king did not belong to the Scyldings but was, rather, the king of the *Géatas*,‡ shows how famous the name of the Danes had become, seeing the tendency to transfer their name to a much larger circle of nations. About the year 565 mention is made again of the viking expeditions of the Danes to France; and in an Italian or Frankish historiographer of the sixth or seventh century, the wild Danes are the only Northern peoples mentioned.§

\* Prokopios, *De bello Gothico*, ii, c. 15: *Δανῶν τὰ ἐθνὴ κατέδραμον*.

† Jordanes, *Getica*, c. 3. Cf. the note below.

‡ I shall not here enter into a discussion as to what people is meant by the Geatas of Beowulf. This question being still open, their name will be kept distinct from the name of the inhabitants of the Swedish province of Götland (Old Norse *Gautar*, Mod. Swed. *Götar*).

§ Venantius Fortunatus, *Carmina*, vii, 7, l. 50: *quæ tibi sit virtus cum prosperitate superna Saxonis et Dani gens cito victa probat*, etc. (De Lupo duce, A.D. 565); *id.* ix, 1, l. 73: *quem Geta, Vasco tremunt, Danus, Euthio, Saxo, Britannus* (Ad Chilpericum regem, †584); *Ethicus Istrius, Cosmographia*, ii, 29: *Chugnos, Frisios, Danos . . . degentes ultra omnia regna terrarum* (Cf. Müllenhoff, *Deutsche altertumskunde*, iii, 228; Teuffel, *Geschichte der römischen litteratur*, 5th ed. ii, 1295–1296: this cosmography was compiled in the

We do not know the particulars of Danish history at that time nor, more exactly, the history of the real Danes, the people of the Scyldings. There is no sound basis for the attempt of scholars to establish a closer relationship between the Heathobards conquered by the Danes (according to the English epics) and the Heruli reported to have been driven away by the Danes (according to Jordanes); no matter whether they take the names Heathobards and Heruli as applying to the same people (supposed to be the original inhabitants of Zealand), who are assumed to have been expelled by the Danes coming from the Scandinavian peninsula (Müllenhoff), or whether they have conceived Heathobards and Heruli as two Baltic peoples who attacked the Danes together (Sophus Bugge). The whole hypothesis stands and falls with a bold interpretation of Jordanes' account, which goes counter to other sources and to Jordanes himself, who elsewhere reports the Heruli to have moved to southern Europe at a much earlier time. Their emigration from the North took place not later than the third century; and in the first part of the sixth century, that is, precisely at the time when the Heathobard war raged or was at an end, a part of this tribe made a peaceful march through the land of the Danes back to their original habitat in the southern part of the Scandinavian peninsula.\*

Merovingian kingdom about 630); *Ravennatis anonymi Cosmographia* (ed. Pinder et Parthey, Berlin 1860; register and map).

\* According to Bremer, *Ethnographie der germanischen stämme* (in Paul's *Grundriss*, 2d ed.), pp. 834-836. For the opposite view see Müllenhoff, *Beovulf*, p. 29-32; and Bugge, *Helgedigtene i den ældre Edda*, pp. 156-163 = *Home of the Eddic Poems*, pp. 165-172.

## 34 THE HEROIC LEGENDS OF DENMARK

There exists also other evidence tending to show that the Heruli are not the original inhabitants of the Danish islands. The sources describe them as a savage people, little receptive to civilizing influences, terrible by the swiftness and the strength of their attack, but lightly armed. This picture, however, fits poorly the inhabitants of the Danish islands who, in the Period of the Migration, during the entire time of the Roman emperors, and in the earlier Migration Period stood highest in northern Europe as to prosperity and civilization. Still further, the Heruli clung to the traditional burning of the dead whilst the chieftains on the Danish islands were eager adherents of the new custom of laying the dead in graves. The theory of the Danish islands being the original home of the Heruli does not, then, agree with the archæological facts. It rests, in truth, solely on the expression which Jordanes uses about the Danes: *ex ipsorum stirpe egressi* (having originated from their [i.e., the Swedes'] race). But it has altogether escaped the investigators, so far, that according to Jordanes' usage, this expression does not contain a piece of historic or geographic, but only ethnographic, information. The Danes belong to that race as the chief branch of which Jordanes considers the Swedes.† There is, accordingly, no basis for the written sources indicating the home of the Danes to have been anywhere but where we find it in historic times, i.e., at the beginning of the sixth century.

† Jordanes, *Getica*, c. 3; cf. c. 23: *Venethi . . . ab una stirpe exorti, tria nunc nomina ediderunt, id est Venethi, Antes, Sclaveni*; cf. c. 4, toward end.

The written sources have but one important and well authenticated piece of information concerning the Danes. About the year 500, and directly after, they played an important rôle which is in strong contrast with the silence that had till then enveloped their existence. Both heroic poetry and chronicles agree in emphasizing their power. It is the necessary condition for the warlike episodes and for the abundant lustre that poetry has shed on the royal residence of the Danes.

Concerning the manner in which they attained their position of power, the sources give us but one single hint, viz., that they drove off the Heruli. There can be no doubt that they were victorious over several tribes, but, as it happens, only the name of the Heruli, which was well known to classical antiquity, has come down to us. This is, possibly, a name signifying, simply, "warriors" (Eruli = Ags. *eorlas*) which served to designate a number of ousted chieftains and their followers. There is, however, scarcely a possibility that a new state could arise in those times without considerable warfare. It is another question whether the struggle with the Heathobards (about 500) was an element in the rise of Danish power. Tradition certainly points to them as the people (*wícingas*) who harried the Danish land with repeated attacks. In that case it is very probable that the victory over them increased the fame rather than the territory of Denmark.

A little more light is thrown on the entire situation when we examine the evidence of archæology. During the first five hundred years of our era the centre of de-

## 36 THE HEROIC LEGENDS OF DENMARK

velopment in matters cultural was located on the Danish islands, and chiefly in Zealand. Already in the Roman Period (1–200) there lived numerous chieftains who owned splendid treasures of jewels and drinking vessels in Roman or semi-Roman workmanship.\* In the time of the earlier migration (200–400) — the period we may rightly speak of as the Zealand Period, or, after the most famous find, the Himlingöje Period — the great majority of these graves of chieftains are encountered on the island of Zealand, and especially in its centre and the southeast. The island must at that time have been the heart of a kingdom that scarcely was confined to Zealand, which was then still to a great extent covered with forests. The jewels and drinking vessels then in use show increased value, even if a more barbaric taste. Although the burial mounds do not contain any weapons, we may divine the warlike spirit of that age from other indications. There can hardly be any doubt that this richest and most advanced people of the North is identical with the one that we find a little later under the name of Danes. On the other hand, Leire or Heorot, the royal residence famed in legend, can scarcely have been their capital, since it is situated on the outermost

\* I am following the chronology of the Swedish archæologists (most easily accessible to English readers in Knut Stjerna's *Essays on Beowulf* (tr. by Hall, 1912; see the chronological table on p. xxxii and the synopsis of contents, p. 64 ff.). Danish archæologists are rather more conservative and are inclined to date the whole development about half a century later. As to the whole subject, cf. S. Müller, *Vor oldtid* (= Jiriczek, *Nordische Allertumskunde*); also the reports of individual excavations in *Nordiske Fortidsminder*, published by the Royal (Danish) Archæol. Society. The names of the "Himlingöje Period" and the "Gold Period" I have coined myself, in accordance with Dr. Schnittger of the Swedish National Museum, seeing that the usual terminologies of archæologists are at variance with one another.

edge of the chief district. The richest finds have been made, on the contrary, near Ringsted, the ancient judicial and religious centre of Zealand, and near Sigersted, associated by its name with legends of King Sigar, whose praises were sung as early as in Widsith (A. S. *Sigehere*).

This Himlingöje period was succeeded by the so-called Gold period (400–600). In it a mighty stream of gold from the Roman empire reached the North, consisting partly of the pay of the troops hired for military service, partly of their booty. On the Danish islands this gold was worn in the shape of medals (*bracteates*), or as neck rings, or simply as ingots or chains from which one might sever a piece for making payment. In the Gautic lands, on the other hand, which enjoyed specially close connections with the Byzantine empire, it was frequently left in the form it had when received in the South, viz., minted metal. Precious things were no longer put into the grave, but hoards of treasure were concealed in the earth, undoubtedly as property to be enjoyed in a world beyond. The Danish islands are seen to be the repositories of great treasures throughout this time, though a Baltic kingdom, or circle of kingdoms, may be said to equal it in this respect: Götland, Öland, and East-Götland, that is, the bulk of the Gautic lands, which region even exceeds Denmark in the total weight of gold found. And these finds are by no means trifles: a single one (from the island of Funen) contains four kilograms of gold, chiefly in the form of ponderous neck rings. Finally, it is only in the course of the sixth century that the high stage of development



## 38 THE HEROIC LEGENDS OF DENMARK

of the Gautic peoples breaks off rather abruptly with the rise of Swedish power. This is the period when the Svealands (Upland and the adjacent provinces which constitute the central parts of modern Sweden) become the most considerable seat of civilization in all that region, in fact, in the whole North.

Our oldest historic information is precisely of the Danes of this "Gold Period." We hear of the fame of the Danes, the splendor of Leire castle (Heorot), and of the celebrated generosity of the Scylding kings. It is a period invested by the tradition of centuries with the splendor of a magnificent court life.

The so-called Vendel Period follows (600–800), as a transition period between the Migration Age and the Viking Age. It is named after the large graves of kings and warriors at Vendel in Upland, the oldest and grandest of which dates from about 600. The finds made in Upland — the chief seat of the Swedes proper — are the richest; those from other Swedish provinces are less important. Equipment of the dead with weapons, and burial in ships are the most characteristic features of this period, bearing witness to the warlike spirit of the life of the chieftains in that age. There are hardly any Danish finds for this time. In fact the Danish graves of this period are so scanty in equipment that difficulty is frequently experienced in dating them correctly. The lack of treasures in them indicates that the day of Danish greatness was at an end and that the nation occupied, at least temporarily, a less prominent position. And just as the treasures of the soil cease, the chronicles of other lands are silent about Denmark. The

negative evidence of this period thus serves to throw light on the duration of the heroic age of Denmark.

It is plain from the archæological data that the "Gold period" coincides practically with the whole span of time treated in *Beowulf*: the palmy days of the Scyldings which are represented as a time of military greatness but threatened by approaching internal dissensions, the power of the Geatas, whose tragic decline the poet of *Beowulf* plainly indicates as being due to hostile inroads, and the military prowess of the Swedes. As Stjerna has pointed out, there is a close parallelism between the feud of the Geatas and the Swedes as described in heroic poetry, and the rivalry between the Swedes and the Gautic races which is evidenced by the archæological finds.\*

Throughout the entire length of the earlier Migration (or Himlingöje) Period, as well as through a portion of the later (Gold) Period following, extend the large finds from the battlefields, where weapons, sometimes numbering thousands, were deposited as votive offerings. We see them on the littoral of the Baltic, on the east coast of southern Jutland (Slesvig), and on the neighboring large island of Funen. These are no doubt to be associated with great battles during the Migration Age. So far most scholars are agreed. But one may venture still one step further, without going counter to the probabilities of the case, and say that, if the rise of the Danish power is the main event of this period, these

\* In the above I have followed Stjerna with respect to archæological conditions, but I differ most emphatically with a considerable number of his historical and literary conclusions. Indeed, I think that the last word has not been said concerning the nationality of the Geatas.

battles may have something to do with that fact. We may think of a possible expulsion of the tribes that took part in the great Anglo-Saxon emigration to England. We may also think of struggles between various powers attempting to gain possession of the already half-deserted districts. In case the chronology of the Swedish archæologists is correct, these battles occurred before the great struggle between the Danes and the Heathobards; but, if the dating of the Danish archæologists is to be accepted, they are contemporaneous with the Heathobard feud.\* No certain proof can be furnished; we know only that the kingdoms of that period arose after hostilities on a large scale — as is indicated also in *Beowulf*.

It is not, however, the warlike aspect of the life of the Danes that impresses the poet of *Beowulf*, but rather the peaceful and splendid life in the royal hall: the magnificent structure of the palace Heorot, the ruler who generously distributes his treasures, and the benches where queen and princess present the festive beaker. Altogether his description gives us an impression of prosperity, joy in life, and refinement. And this corresponds precisely to the impression which is

\* Almgren (*Stjerna, Essays*, p. xxxiii) gives the following chronology: 250, Vimose (Vi moor) in Funen; 300, Torsbjærg moor in Sundeved (southern Jutland); 350, Nydam moor (i) in Angel (southern Jutland); 400, Kragehul moor in Funen; 400–450, Nydam moor (ii). The Danish master of archæology, S. Müller, differs from this, however, stating that “while the oldest discoveries may still belong to the 4th century, the youngest of them is, probably, to be dated later than A.D. 500” (*Vor Oldtid*, p. 561 = Jiriczek, ii, 147). In general agreement with him is Wimmer who, reasoning from the relative chronology of the runic inscriptions, arrives at the following absolute dates: Torsbjærg, 400, at the earliest; Kragehul, not more than 100 years later (Wimmer, *Die runenschrift*, 1886, pp. 301 ff.; the same in *Haandbog i det nordlesvigske spørgsmaals historie*, 1901, pp. 29–31).

given by the Zealand graves of the Danes during the Roman period and during the migration time: we see noble lines of chieftains, richly adorned and supplied with precious drinking vessels intended to imitate exactly the correct Roman way of serving wine. In this respect the descriptions of Beowulf and the evidence of the graves tally exactly, both showing the Danes of that period as the most highly civilized race in the North.

The above considerations, besides furnishing a fixed point in time for establishing a chronology of the Leire kings and localizing the description of Beowulf, also allow us to see how heroic poetry arose. An essential figure at the royal court of the period of the Migration of Nations is the bard who recites lays dealing with the deeds of the heroes of yore, but who also sings the praises of his master — a figure such as is described in Beowulf and numerous chronicles. The Anglo-Saxon celebration of the life in Heorot corresponds not only to real conditions surrounding the bards but also directly to the songs of Danish poets concerning the very royal hall whose inmates they were. On the one hand, the king as the fountain head of all this magnificence, and the bands of proud warriors belong there; on the other, generation after generation of poets who animated this scene with their art and — like the wandering singer of Widsith — spread the fame of their king to kindred peoples far and near.\*

And now to sum up: the period of the migration sees the rise of new kingdoms, the consolidation of states, the development of royal power, and witnesses the birth

\* Chadwick, *The Heroic Age*, c. 5.

of Teutonic heroic poetry. Among the heroes of these chaotic and convulsed times the name of the Danes suddenly looms up as that of a nation widely famed. The extent of their realm cannot be made out with any certainty and we can but guess at the struggles that led to its growth. On the direct evidence of material antiquities we have the proof of a rich civilization which is both the fruit of, and the necessary condition for, this period of greatness; we may even in some respects see its ups and downs within certain districts, i.e., the Danish islands and most particularly Zealand. We are witness to a number of events, mostly such as occur toward the end of the growth of the kingdom: the rise of the race of Halfdan or of the Scyldings as the leaders of the nation; the choice of Leire as the royal residence and the erection of the hall Heorot; the struggles with the Heathobards, focussed in a single bloody occurrence during the marriage festival; and, finally, the growth of internal dissensions which destroy Hrothgar's royal work and probably also caused Hrolf's fall. We see all the events that most strongly interested the spirit of that period; but we are allowed to see through the eyes of the poets only, as it were, the shining white crests of the great waves which at that time were subverting older nations.

The period of the Migration, it must ever be emphasized, marked the rebirth of the entire Teutonic race, not only through the admixture of new elements and the addition of new impulses of civilization, but also because of the new experiences the various peoples underwent. In this period great empires are seen to

arise, mighty shapes of warriors flash forth suddenly only to disappear again, and great deeds are done to be forgotten as quickly. It was an era notable for the formation of empires and states with an increased royal power as center; the time also for the birth of the first great poetic period of our race. These two phenomena are most intimately connected; for it is the fates of these mighty kings, who emerge but to vanish again, which form the contents of this poetry: Ermanric, Attila, Theodoric, the Burgundian kings, and the heroes of the Catalaunian Plains.

The Danes had a share in these great movements. Independently, by their own strength, and not in feeble imitation of other races, they undergo the greatest and most nationally characteristic destiny which then fell to the lot of the Teutonic tribes. In the midst of this period of disintegration the rise of the Danish people and of the Danish empire stands out as one of the most remarkable and enduring facts. The lustre of poetic celebration surrounds this great event. Even the emigrating Angles and Saxons carry with them the picture of the newly erected royal hall of the Halfdan dynasty as the greatest exemplar of noble conduct of life, replete with grand deeds, of battles against enemies, and — as in the course of time poetry magnifies the picture — even of the struggles of heroes with monsters.

### 3. THE NAMING-CUSTOM OF THE MIGRATION PERIOD

Our knowledge of the details of this remarkable period is still very circumscribed. Hence every new point of information about the life of those times, how-

#### 44 THE HEROIC LEGENDS OF DENMARK

ever trifling it may seem, is of definite value. I shall in what follows utilize a means hitherto overlooked of testing the trustworthiness of traditions — examination of names and of naming.

If one examines the names of the three Northern dynasties preserved in *Beowulf*, the royal families of the Danes, the Geatas, and the Swedes, one will immediately perceive that as an invariable rule *the name of the son always alliterates with that of the father* (Helgi the son of Halfdan, Athisl the son of Ottar, etc.\* This rule has no exceptions; the eight names of the Scyldings all begin with H, as also the five names of the Hrethlings, and the five names of the Scilfings with a vowel. A fourth princely race, the Danish Hocings, have three names, all in H. This rule cannot have originated with the English poets, for it is not carried through in the case of the non-Scandinavian royal races. On the other hand, the rule holds true for the Northern runic inscriptions of the sixth century. Thus *HlevagastiR HoltingaR* (son of Holt), on the Golden Horn of Gallehus; *ErilaR* son of *Asugi'sal* on the spearshaft of Kragehul moor; etc.† Passing from the runic monuments to the oldest and most reliable genealogy in Scandinavian literature,

\* Cf. the genealogies in Pontus Fahlbeck's *Beowulf-squadet såsom källa till nordisk fornhistoria* (*Antiquarisk tidskrift for Sverige*, viii).

† Likewise on the contemporaneous rune-stone of Strand in Southern Norway: *HadulaikaR* son of *HagustaldaR*. Cf. from a slightly later period (and with repetition of the same element) *Hariuulafa HaduulafR HæruulafiR* (stone of Istaby in Bleking (Sweden), the two first also on the Stentofta (Sweden) rune-stone); also *HroraR HroreR* (By rune-stone, Norway, 7th century; Bugge, *Norges indskrifter*, i, p. 112). — There are no exceptions to this rule among the inscriptions in the older runic alphabet, if one reads, with Wimmer (*Runenschrift*, p. 104) the inscription of the Torsbjærg sheath as: "*VolþuþevaR*, he famous on Nivang" (differently deciphered by Burg, *Alt. runeninschr.*, 27, 158).

the *Ynglingatal* of the skald Thjótholf, we find in it alliteration of the names of all old, historic Upsala kings, but not of those of still older, mythical kings, nor of the very last, the names of Norwegian petty kings of the Viking Age.

The application of this principle of alliteration is sharply limited in time. It is followed by the entirely different custom of the Viking Age, when the child inherits the name (and therewith the nature) of some departed kinsman, by a kind of metempsychosis. This was preceded by the older name-variation, according to which the child's name has one composition element in common with his father's or other near relative's. The latter probably developed from a common Indo-European custom and is partly continued in the alliterative system of naming. Thus we find among the Scyldings Heorogar with a son Heorowearð, and his brother Hrothgar with the sons Hrothmund and Hrethric. These names are seen to follow both the alliterative and the variation system, whilst others have only their alliteration in common with the remainder of the family; e.g., Healfdene and his son Halga. From this it follows that alliteration is the fixed and invariable rule in the naming of the period.

Outside of the Scandinavian race the same custom is found, especially among the Ostrogoths during the period of the migration; also, among the Burgundians, and still other tribes. I shall not now enter on this in detail but refer to a special examination of this question to be made in the near future.\*

\* See *Danmarks Heltedigtning*, iii: Harald Hildetand, introductory chapter.



The purpose of this new custom of naming is apparent enough. It is due to poetic exigencies. The alliteration connecting the son's with his father's name was then particularly euphonious to peoples' ears. In fact, we may safely say more definitely that it was this alliteration which made their names available in poetry, in heroic lays. It was an age in which the great figures of history engrossed the attention of poets, but when, at the same time, the customs of men — at least in such a comparatively small matter as naming — had regard to poetic requirements. The whole period of the migration is like one great epic. The power of poetry becomes evident even in smaller matters, in the fact that it is strong enough to change a custom so firmly rooted as naming children after their ancestors.

This Northern custom of naming in vogue about the year 500 may serve as a counterproof for the reliability of tradition. The three groups of great Danish, Swedish, and Geatish kings is irreproachable in this respect. But a strong shadow of suspicion falls on that king Beowulf who is stated to be Healfdene's father. For other reasons, too, we are led to believe that he is not an historic figure but some ancient progenitor. Likewise, it is strange that the other Beowulf, the hero of the poem, should have occupied the throne of the Geats in the sixth century as the son of Ecgtheow and the descendant of Vægmund. For the same reason, there are doubts about Ecgvæla who, according to a not altogether certain reading, is the father of Heremod; nor does his name alliterate with the Scyldings. In this case the fact that names in -væla do not occur in the

North renders it fairly certain that we are dealing here with a figure independently introduced by the English poet. Of still greater importance is the criticism of the later tradition of the Scylding legends which is possible by means of this test. Considering such names as Ingiald Frothason, Hroerek Ingialdsson, Agnar Hroarsson, introduced as belonging to the Scyldings, we must conclude that all names which do not begin with an H must have been interpolated into the genealogy at a later time; for they reveal a custom of naming entirely permissible in the Viking Age, or during the Middle Ages, but unknown in the sixth century.

At the same time, the details of naming may also reveal facts of more direct, personal interest. Indeed, the historian seeks with especial zest such documents as reveal the individual thoughts and intentions of a person. Personal documents of this kind may be seen in the names the Scyldings gave their sons.

The children of King Healfdene bear names expressive of the various interests typical of the period. Heorogar contains the elements "sword" and "spear"; Halga denotes the "holy one," i.e., probably, "he who stands under the protection of the gods," or, possibly, "he who cannot be harmed;" Hrothgar contains — besides an element of his brother's name — the thought of honor, fame, glorious memory, and celebration in poetry; for all that is contained in O. N. *hróðr*-. And the family chooses thereafter with definite purpose names containing this element. Witness the names, first, of his brother's son Hrothulf (O. N. *Hrólfr*), and then of his own sons, Hrothmund and Hrethric (O. N. *Hrærekr*).

## 48 THE HEROIC LEGENDS OF DENMARK

The conception of honor, fame, is the resplendent ideal of the race which subdued the enemies of the Danes and raised their own people to greatness. Nor did it shine in vain for them, seeing that for many centuries afterwards the memory of Hrolf lived on as that of the most glorious king in all the North.

The deeds of the Scyldings were soon enveloped in the mists of legend, which made their name shine with all the greater lustre. It will be the task of this investigation to appreciate the development and real significance of these heroic figures of legend and of lay.

In addition to the custom of naming, a lexicological study of the individual names will furnish indications for the determination of the historic trustworthiness of the poem. Investigations along this line have already been made.\*

All names of members of the Scylding family prove well-known in Northern, and especially Danish, sources. Only Heorogar is not found, even if the single elements of his name do occur.† Hence there is no likelihood of these persons being the invention of any Anglo-Saxon poet — which conclusion is still further confirmed by the identity with Northern legendary material.

This evidence is important, as will be seen when we remember that those of the warriors of the Danes who occur solely in connection with the fight with Grendel have non-Scandinavian elements in their names (*Asc-*

\* By Naumann, *Altnordische namenstudien*, 1912, pp. 179–182 (the relation of Beowulf to Scandinavian names) and by Binz, *Zeugnisse zur altenglischen Heldensage* (Paul und Braune, *Beiträge*, xx), pp. 173–179.

† Umgekehrt sind im ags. namen mit heoro- äusserst selten, hrēð und hrōð sehr selten und sehr spät.

here, *Yrmenláf*). No reasonable doubt can obtain here that these figures are the property of the poet himself. An element unknown in Northern names is seen also in *Ecgvela* (l. 1710, the father of *Heremod*?) whose place was questioned already because his name does not alliterate with the other names of the *Scyldings*.

Unknown elsewhere, both in Scandinavian and Anglo-Saxon are the names of the spokesman *Unferth* and of Queen *Wealhtheow*. Women's names in *-théow* are likewise unknown among Teutonic peoples. The historical existence of these figures is therefore extremely doubtful.

#### 4. THE SCYLDING FEUD; HROTHULF; UNFERTH

The epic of *Beowulf*, which begins by telling of the previous fortunes of the *Scyldings* — the part, namely, which is supposed to precede the fight with *Grendel* — contains also an episode in which we are allowed a glance ahead in time to the fates of the *Scyldings* thereafter and their internecine feuds. This is also the only scene in which *Hrothulf* appears.\*

On this matter most recent investigators are agreed, especially, perhaps, after the appearance of the author's *Danmarks Heltedigtning*. Still it is of importance to account for the episode in its entirety.

The scene is the celebration by a banquet of *Beowulf*'s victory over *Grendel*. *Hrothgar* enters the hall from the bedchamber with his suite, followed by the queen

\* The connection of this episode was first discovered by Ludvig Schroeder, a disciple of N. F. S. Grundtvig, in a pamphlet entitled *Om Beowulfedrapen* (Copenhagen 1875). Independently Sarrazin in 1898 wrote his article *Rolf Krake und sein vetter im Beowulf* (*Engl. Stud.* xxiv, pp. 144 ff.) of similar content.

## 50 THE HEROIC LEGENDS OF DENMARK

with her maidens. Standing in the middle of the hall, under the pillars of the high-seat, and in the presence of all the people, he makes a speech of thanks to Beowulf for his deed. Then the preparations are made for the banquet. The busy hands of men and women have already repaired, and covered with golden tapestries along the walls, the damage the hall had undergone during the fight between Grendel and Beowulf.

Arrived was the hour  
when to hall proceeded Healfdene's son:  
the king himself would sit to banquet.  
Ne'er heard I of host in haughtier throng  
more graciously gathered round giver-of-rings !  
Bowed then to bench those bearers-of-glory,  
fain of the feasting. Featly received  
many a mead-cup the mighty-in-spirit,  
kinsmen who sat in the sumptuous hall,  
Hrothgar and Hrothulf. Heorot now  
was filled with friends; the folk of Scyldings  
ne'er yet had tried the traitor's deed.\* (Or, more  
literally: "the Scyldings, leaders of a great nation, used not at  
all treachery at that time.")

Then Hrothgar presents Beowulf with weapons and other precious gifts. In order to rejoice the warriors in the hall, Hrothgar's bard sings a lay about the fight of the Hocings in the royal hall of the Frisians.

The lay was finished,  
the gleeman's song. Then glad rose the revel;  
bench-joy brightened. Bearers draw

\* Ll. 1008-1019:

Mágas wáran [þára],  
swíð-hicgende on sele þám héan,  
Hróðgár ond Hróðulf. Heorot innan wæs  
fréondom áfyllled; nalles fácen-stafas  
þéod-Scyldingas þenden fremedon.

from their "wonder-vats" wine. Comes Wealhtheow forth,  
under gold-crown goes where the good pair sit,  
uncle and nephew, true each to the other one,  
kindred in amity.\* Unferth the spokesman  
at the Scylding lord's feet sat: men had faith in his spirit,  
his keenness of courage, though kinsmen had found him  
unsure at the sword-play. The Scylding queen spoke:  
"Quaff of this cup, my king and lord,  
breaker of rings, and blithe be thou,  
gold-friend of men; to the Geats here speak  
such words of mildness as man should use.  
Be glad with thy Geats; of those gifts be mindful,  
or near or far, which now thou hast.  
Men say to me, as son thou wishest  
yon hero to hold. Thy Heorot purged,  
jewel-hall brightest, enjoy while thou canst,  
with many a largess; and leave to thy kin  
folk and realm when forth thou goest  
to greet thy doom. For gracious I deem  
my Hrothulf, willing to hold and rule  
nobly our youths, if thou yield up first,  
prince of the Scyldings, thy part in the world.  
I ween with good he will well requite  
offspring of ours, when all he minds  
that for him we did in his helpless days  
of gift and grace to gain him honor!"  
Then she turned to the seat where her sons were placed,  
Hrethric and Hrothmund, with heroes' bairns,  
young men together: the Geat, too, sat there,  
Beowulf brave, the brothers between."†

Again she presents to him the filled beaker, adding rings  
and garments as gifts; she wishes him good in his heroic

\* Ll. 1163 f.:

þær þá góðan twégen  
sæton suhter-gefæderan; þá gyt wæs hiera sib ætgædere,  
æghwylc óðrum trýwe.

† Ll. 1159-1191.

## 52 THE HEROIC LEGENDS OF DENMARK

life so well begun and prays him to be a support to her son. Her last words are in praise of the Scyldings' happy loyalty and concord.\* Then she returns to her seat, the warriors joyously drink the wine, without thinking of evil to come. When evening arrives, Hrothgar withdraws to his rest, and a band of warriors guard the hall.

This scene is poetically in place here. It is, as it were, a peaceful moment of rest between the fight with Grendel and the renewed visitation of the monsters. The description agrees well with what is otherwise said in the poem — apart from the somewhat surprising appearance of Hrothulf and the attention bestowed on his position. But the striking thing is that this scene of peace contains hints of a future catastrophe which is due to internal dissensions among the Scyldings. In fact, this hint is made on two separate occasions and both times with the words that “then,” or “still,” there was as yet no treachery between them. Indeed, Hrothgar and Hrothulf cannot appear together without the poet reminding us that their friendship was sometime to come to an end.

No observant reader of the poem can escape the thought that the peace between these two will be followed by strife; but in the mind of the audience of ancient times these allusions — as many others in

\* Ll. 1226-1229:

Béo þú suna mínum  
dædum gedéfe, dréam healdende!  
Hér is æghwylc eorl óðrum getrýwe  
módes milde, man-drihtne hold.

Beowulf — must have roused memories of the heroic lays they knew already.\*

In proof of the above contention we may cite the brief account in Widsith: *Hrothulf and Hrothgar held the longest concord of kin and cousins together*. Here we have a still more subdued expression of the very same sentiment contained in Beowulf; for this emphasis on “longest” in itself suggests the question: what, then, brought about the end of this peace? There is another piece of information we may read out of this, viz., that the presentation of Hrothgar and Hrothulf as a pair must be from some popular lay. Hence the scene where both sit together in the high-seat, identical as it is in Beowulf and Widsith, must be taken from some such source also in the case of Beowulf. There can be no doubt then as to the real purpose of the episode: it is intended to form the introduction to a lay about their feud and is borrowed by the poet of Beowulf only as a kind of accessory to his picture.

The actual course of this feud seems at first sight unknown. However, the queen’s speech, aimed at safeguarding the future of her children, points precisely to the side where danger threatens: what is to become of the youths when their old father is deceased? Her words to Hrothulf about the confidence she has in him are not only an expression of her expectation, but clearly also an attempt to bind him by her earnest plea.

\* A fact pointing to this conclusion is the appearance of Hrothulf as a person of high rank without his being presented to the audience with regard to position or relationship. Only later on are we told that he and Hrothgar are *suktor-gefæderan* though we are nowhere advised how this relationship came about.



## 54 THE HEROIC LEGENDS OF DENMARK

For no worse danger could threaten than for the war-like chieftain who, while Hrothgar lived, was his co-regent and had himself a claim to the throne, to betray them and pursue his own interests. Thus all our thoughts are made to circle about Hrothulf's line of conduct, especially when, directly after his first mention, we have been warned of his future breach of faith with Hrothgar. One can hardly escape the thought that the scene, down to every single word of the queen, points forward to this future feud. And this thought must have conveyed a still stronger impression to the minds of those who knew the contents of the old lay.

External testimony confirming the course of events to have been as we surmise is to be found in the later (Danish) tradition according to which King Hroerek (*Hréthric*) succumbed to Hrolf's (*Hróthulf's*) superior army although he was the possessor of the golden treasures of the royal castle.

But this is plain already from the Anglo-Saxon material, since all persons involved in the catastrophe are introduced. The tendency so frequently exhibited by the poet, to allude to coming misfortunes, is in evidence here also.\* The character of all the persons connected with the action is sharply outlined by the poet; thus, Hrothgar's extreme old age, and approaching senility;

\* Cf. the coming destruction of Heorot (*Ne wæs hit lenge þá gēn*); the future doom of the Geatas (l. 3021); the hints as to Beowulf's future death; and the like. (Cf. Klaeber, *Aeneis and Beowulf*, *Archiv für das stud. der neueren Sprachen und Litteraturen*, xccvi, 46 ff.). — I call attention to W. W. Lawrence's interesting suggestion that even the bard's recital of the tragic fate of Hildeburh is to form a conscious contrast to the glee in the hall Heorot and to be a foreboding of the feud which the queen strives to avert (*Beowulf and the Tragedy of Finsburg*, *Mod. Lang. Notes*, xxxii, 387).

Hrothulf's youthful strength and warrior nature; the helplessness of Hrethric and his brother; Queen Wealhtheow's foresight and the pains she takes to maintain peace. Whether Beowulf's promise that Hrethric shall have the support of the Geatas has reference to the above relation we do not know; but it is certain that in the oldest Northern source the Gautar appear among the enemies of Hrolf kraki.\*

One figure needs to be mentioned particularly, Hrothgar's *pyle* or spokesman. He is introduced as "sitting at the feet of the Scylding king"; that is, then, on the

\* I cannot deny myself the pleasure of quoting Fr. Klaeber's summary of Hrothulf's position in Beowulf (*Mod. Lang. Notes*, xx, 9-11) which, though altogether independent of my presentation, exactly parallels its line of thought: "Hrothulf has no share in the action of the poem. The whole story might have been told without his existence ever being alluded to. (No wonder that Müllenhoff laid the insertion of the name at the door of his interpolator A.) He seems to be a figurehead, yet one of marked dignity, rank, and importance. In epic tradition he is closely associated with Hrothgar. Shoulder by shoulder they fight against Ingeld, humble his pride and rout the host of the Heathobards (*Widsith*, 45-49). They occupy seats of honor side by side in the hall Heorot (*Beow.*, 1163 f.), as befits near relatives of royal rank who are called *mágas* (1015), and *suhtergefæderan* (1163) *suh-torfædran*, (*Widsith*, 46). It almost looks as if Hrothulf were conceived as a sort of joint agent, and it may be questioned whether *mága gemedu* (147), 'the consent of the kinsmen' (without which there was properly no admission to the land of the Danes) should not be understood with reference to the *mágas* (1015). With just a little imagination we may draw a fine picture of two Scyldings ruling in high state and glory over the Danes, Hrothgar the old and wise, a peacemaker (470 ff, 1859 ff, 2026 ff), a man of sentiment, and Hrothulf, the young and valiant, a great warrior, a man of energy and ambition. At a later time, however, as the poet intimates, not without fine 'tragical irony' (Sarrazin), the harmonious union was broken (*þá gyt wæs kiera sib ætgædere./æghwylc ððrum trýwe* (1164), cf. *Widsith*, 45: *Hrôðwulf and Hrôðgár heoldon lengest/sibbe ætsomne*), treachery was committed (*nalles fâcenstafas/þéodscyldingas/þenden fremedon*. 1018), and Hrothulf, unmindful of his obligations to his uncle, behaved ill towards his cousins, Hrethric and Hrothmund (1180 ff), that is to say (very likely) usurped the throne (cf. Sarrazin, *Engl. Stud.* xxiii, p. 230; Uhlenbeck, *Tijdschrift voor nederl. taal- en letterk.*, xx, 186). The 'epic prophecy,' though skilfully veiled in this instance, is no less reliable than the prediction of the great feud between the

step to the throne, and named in immediate connection with the "good pair," "uncle and nephew," and also with the sentence that they were "as yet each true to the other one, kindred in amity." At the same time his personality is characterized, which is not necessary as far as the epic of Beowulf is concerned; both trusted in him although there were things in his past which ought to have made them question his loyalty. This last point altogether excludes the possibility of Unferth being quite accidentally introduced in this connection. The poet was thinking precisely of his character in relation to Hrothgar's and Hrothulf's future fates.

In the manuscript his name appears as *Hunferð*; but the alliteration proves that it ought to begin with a vowel: *Unferð*. Reducing this to the form it must have had at the time when Beowulf was composed we obtain the form *Unfrið*.

This name signifies "unpeace, feud." It does not occur elsewhere in Anglo-Saxon or in Northern poetry.\* We have here, then, a poetic name for a subsidiary person, indicative of his character; just as *Widsith* signifies "the widely traveled singer." Unferth is mentioned in the Hrothulf episode as the instigator of evil.

Danes and the Heathobards (83 ff., 2026 ff.)." (Note of Klaeber:) "One is tempted to regard the motive of Beowulf's adoption (946 ff., 1175 f.) as in some way connected with the motive of Hrothulf's treachery. In case of future difficulties among the Scyldings, Beowulf might come to the rescue of the Danish prince (or princes, cf. 1226 f.), or Hrethric might find a place of refuge at the court of the Geats (*he mæg þær fela/fréondas findan*, 1837)."

\* *Unfrid* occurs scarcely anywhere but in High German: *Unifrid* in Lango-bardian, perhaps also elsewhere, may have come from a form *Hunifrid* (Förstemann, *Altd. namenbuch* i, 2d ed., p. 1479). — *Hunfrið*, *Hunferð* are the forms most common in A.S. and this is doubtless the reason for the copyist having substituted this name for the form *Unfrið* which was unknown to him.

The author of *Beowulf* has also made direct use of him in his epic. A *pyle* was the very person to step forward when some stranger appeared in the royal hall. He appears also in the character which we must suppose him to possess in connection with the Hrothulf feud:

“Unferth spake, the son of Ecglaf,  
who sat at the feet of the Scylding's lord,  
unbound the battle-runes.

[or: gave vent to secret thoughts of strife.]—

Beowulf's quest,  
sturdy seafarer's, sorely galled him;  
ever he envied that other men  
should more achieve in middle-earth  
of fame under heaven than he himself” (ll. 499 ff.).

This jealousy and quarrelsomeness must necessarily bring him into conflict with Hrothulf's youthful renown as a hero. Here these qualities result in a flyting match with Beowulf in which he is silenced by the Geatish warrior.

This evil character of Unferth does not, however, agree with the general plan of the poet of the epic; for a little while after it is entirely changed:

“For he bore not in mind, the bairn of Ecglaf,  
sturdy and strong, that speech he had made,  
drunk with wine, now his weapon he lent  
to a stouter swordman” (l. 1465),

when the spokesman offers the young hero his good sword for the battle in the deep with Grendel's dam. — We may possibly see in this very passage a corroboration of the view that it was not the poet of *Beowulf* who created the character of Unferth; for then his rôle would probably not have changed. He is, on the con-

trary, a well-known figure whom the poet makes use of in the former scene in his desire to describe the life in Heorot and as an opportunity to give an account of Beowulf's youthful exploits. For this reason he is so unessential in the Beowulf episodes, but so necessary a figure in the origin of the Scylding feud. The poet of Beowulf did not, in conformity with the whole plan of his poem, require the figure of a villain causing feuds; we need no such for the story of the hero who slays the monster. The Scylding feud, on the other hand, consisting of a breach of amity between close kinsmen, does, from the character of Teutonic heroic poetry, by all means require such an evil counsellor. Therefore the figure of Unferth cannot have been created for the purposes of a Beowulf epic but is a necessity in the economy of the Scylding story.\*

Besides his relation to the Scyldings, there is Unferth's relation to Beowulf and his own past. In his answer, the Geatish warrior gives Unferth to understand that he never performed deeds worthy of being compared to Beowulf's, "though thou wast the bane of thy brethren dear, thy closest kin, whence curse of hell awaits thee, well as thy wit may serve!" (l. 587); and an allusion to the same effect is made in the Hrothulf scene: "Unferth, the spokesman, at the Scylding lord's feet sat: men had faith in his spirit, his keenness of courage, though kinsmen had found him unsure at the sword-

\* Chadwick (*Heroic Age*, p. 160) disagrees with my interpretation of the Hrothulf episode; but nevertheless corroborates my thesis, without meaning to do so, by declaring the hypothesis that Unferth was invented by the poet for the sake of the action of the poem to be "at best uncertain." He is attentive to the fact, just as I am, that his character is not of one cast.

play" (*þeah hé his mágum náere árfæst æt ecga gelácum*, l. 1167). Evidently the same event is alluded to even if the second passage, taken by itself, might also mean merely that he had left his kinsmen in the lurch; for there cannot be two separate instances of his having betrayed his kinsmen with the outcome that they were slain. Unferth is not, to be sure, one of the main figures in heroic poetry about whom cycles of legends have grouped themselves. His very position at court and his name in the abstract assign to him a humbler rôle.

But the same reasons argue this fratricide to be, not at all the story itself (i.e. an independent plot), but a preliminary incident. In general, his abstract and subordinate rôle prevents his having a tradition of his own. Thus, to take an example from Northern lays, the evil and greedy Fafnir has a preliminary history: he murdered his father to obtain his gold; but the killing of Hreithmar is no independent legend; rather it is a presupposition for understanding certain epic features and the nature of the later fates of Fafnir and his treasure.

But this preliminary story, again, this fratricide, has no relation at all to Beowulf, but only to the Scyldings. Any one who is earnestly endeavoring to understand the manner in which hero legends arise in the epic world of Teutonic antiquity, must recognize what Unferth's place "at the Scylding lord's feet" means.

The outlines of the Scylding feud are then, briefly, these: after Hrothgar's death, conflict arises between Hrothulf and Hrethric. The latter has the stronger

claim to the throne, in so far as he is the son of the last king. Hrothulf, on the other hand, is only of royal race; but as the grandson of Healfdene he also can claim the crown, and he is superior to his younger cousin as a leader in war. In the course of events he deposes his cousin, and, according to Northern tradition, slays him, which in those times is about the same. Subsidiary figures in this struggle are Queen Wealhtheow, who seeks to maintain peace, and Unferth who, with his natural jealousy of the brave, is the logical antagonist of Hrothulf.

Now the question may be asked whether all this corresponds to reality, or whether it is not, rather, a poetic reconstruction. The objection may be raised that it does not agree with the picture drawn in later Northern tradition of Hrolf kraki as the noblest and best of all the kings of Leire. We shall return to this aspect of the matter in another connection. Suffice it to remember that the later tradition makes little of the Hroerek episode or neglects it altogether, no doubt because it agreed so little with that conception of the heroic figure of Hrolf kraki which became the dominating one.

Judged by the standards of those times, this deed of Hrolf seems less improbable. At the very time when the events described in Beowulf took place (about 500), treacherous slaughter of kinsmen tarnished the glory of the most splendid heroes of the Teutonic race. At that time Chlodovech made himself the ruler of all the Franks, by a series of treacherous acts as diabolic as any told in the later Northern tradition of the diplo-

macy of Ivar vithfathmi and Ingiald illrathi. And after Chlodovech's death his children and children's children raged against one another with war and murder. The great Theodoric sat on the throne of Italy thanks to the assassination of Odovakar. Thorismund, the young king of the Visigoths, and the hero of the Catalaunian fields, was slain two years after the battle by assassins hired by his brother. For very good reasons heroic poetry interprets the greatest episode of the Migration Age, the battle with the Huns, as the great spectacle of the struggle of two hostile brothers, Angantyr and Hlōth, for the empire. In comparison with what was happening in central and southern Europe at that time, the feud of Hrothulf with his cousins seems a relatively quiet event. It was a period of unmeasured desire for power and thirst for riches. In its tumultuous billows the voices of justice and of duty toward kinsmen were not heard.

Hrothulf's act of pushing Hrothgar's son from the throne presented itself to the consciousness of those times as a necessity. In the tempests of that age the state which did not stand firm was destroyed. The Danes were threatened by enemies round about, the bloody Heathobard feud was scarcely yet ended. It would not do to divide the power. Rather, it had to be collected in one hand, and the warriors had gladly followed Hrothulf in battles both within and without the realm. Such a feud as the one between Hrothulf and Hrethric was not an uncommon occurrence in the Migration Age, and we have good reason to believe that so important an event really did take place.



Several of the persons mentioned in these episodes of Beowulf are standing characters in the Scylding tradition; thus Hrothgar (*Hróar*), Hrethric (*Hrærekr*), Hrothulf (*Hrólfr*). This proves a common basis for Danish and Anglo-Saxon tradition and would also seem to indicate a foundation of fact. The agreement of these names with the custom of naming prevailing during the Migration Period points to the same conclusion.

Only one member of the house of the Scyldings is mentioned in Beowulf alone, viz., Hrothmund. No objection can be raised against his name, the corresponding Northern form *Hrómund* being well-known in later times. We may, then, take him to be a historic personage who was afterwards lost from poetic tradition. In thinking so, we also have the support of the fact that the remaining members of the Scyldings are historic. On the other hand, it is possible that this accessory figure was employed even in Beowulf for poetical reasons. There obtains very generally in heroic poetry, as well as in other popular tradition, a "law of twins"; persons of lower rank, and especially of young age, have a tendency to appear in couples. It is as if their appearance together served to emphasize the slight importance of the individual.\* Just in such fashion Hrethric and Hrothmund sit together on the young men's bench. There does not, however exist any sure criterion

\* Concerning this "law of the twins" in popular poetry see my article *Epische gesetze der volksdichtung* (*Zeitschrift für d. Alt.*, li., 6 = *Danske Studier*, 1908, p. 69). Examples: Hroar and Helgi act together as children, when exposed to the persecution of their uncle Frothi; but when grown up, their natures present a clear contrast (*Hrólfs saga*); Erp and Eitil, the defenceless children of Atli, are slain by their own mother Guthrun (*Atlamál*); the two little sons of Signy, by Sigmund and Sinfiotli (*Völsunga saga*); the

as to which of the two possibilities — the one poetic, the other historic — is to be accepted. All we can do is to surmise Hrothmund's historicity, judging from the general character of the list of persons in *Beowulf*.

Another case is that of Unferth. He also is limited to Anglo-Saxon tradition, but is no secondary character in the Scylding tragedy. If he is not the main person, still his envious mind supplies the spark that serves to explode the powder which had accumulated in the house of the Scyldings. His is a character which is typical in the heroic poetry of the Teutons, viz., the malicious counselor of the old king who machinates against the young hero. Other examples of this type are Bikki, the evil counselor of Ermanric (in Scandinavian poetry) who by his slander causes the death of the king's innocent son Randver; and Blind hinn bōlvísi ("the malicious"), the counselor of King Sigar, who incites the Siling kings and the sons of Hamund against one another until both houses are utterly destroyed.

As we have seen, Unferth's name represents no historical character but, on the contrary, embodies an idea. He is the personified "unpeace," that is, a "breaker of peace," an inciter to quarrel. His introduction into the Scylding story marks the point where tradition underwent the change from a mere historical picture to a freer, more poetical treatment. He is limited to Anglo-Saxon tradition, where the attention is focussed on the

two young sons of King Niðuðr, by the fettered Vǫlund (*Vǫlundarkviða*); Regner and his younger brother Thorald are persecuted by an evil step-mother (Saxo, ii); Hadding and Guthorm are the names of the two persecuted youths in Saxo's *Haddingsaga* (i), but Guthorm soon disappears, leaving Hadding the hero of the story; Roe and Scatus are passive characters slain by their own brother Halfdan (Saxo, ii).

relations of Hrothgar, Hrethric, and Hrothulf; but is unknown in Danish tradition, where the feud between Hrothulf and Heoroweard is the essential topic. He is thus typical for Anglo-Saxon interest in Scylding tradition. Heroic names of such abstract meaning are never met with in Scandinavian sources, though they are familiar enough in Anglo-Saxon lays. Hence his name likewise argues purely Anglo-Saxon origin.

His opponent is Queen Wealhtheow, a *friðo-webbe* or "weaver-of-peace," of the most outspoken character. Her name, differing so markedly from all those known to us, makes it probable that she is a purely poetic character. Its elements point to Anglo-Saxon origin. Her speeches in Heorot show her to be the wise and farsighted peacemaker, a type favored more by the Anglo-Saxons than by the Scandinavians. However, her endeavors to avert the coming tragedy are in vain; her rôle is to look on powerless whilst all her wishes come to naught. She belongs to that type of sorrowful womanhood, not unknown to Scandinavian poetry (cf. the rôle of Guthrun in some lays), but much more familiar in the more sentimental Anglo-Saxon heroic poetry; Freawaru and Hildeburh in *Beowulf* are the most striking instances.

To sum up: we have in the Anglo-Saxon Scylding traditions a theme of heroic poetry derived, in the main, from actual events and reflecting them on the whole in a trustworthy fashion, but limited to a small number of plots: each of them sufficient to be the contents of a single lay. The tragedy of the young Hrothulf looms high over them all in poetic interest. It is based —

most likely — on the greatest domestic conflict in the house of the Scyldings during the Migration Age, and is elaborated and concentrated so as to form an impressive dramatic action.

In the Scylding legends of Scandinavia, recorded in sources only two to four centuries later than Beowulf, we shall meet with survivals of the same historical events and with themes which are in large measure identical with those of the Anglo-Saxon traditions, despite the fact that, at first blush, both plots and characters appear so very different.

## CHAPTER II

### THE BIARKAMAL

#### 1. TRACES OF HISTORY IN THE BIARKAMAL

**I**N the mind of the Scandinavians during later ages, the memory of these old kings attaches itself chiefly to the Biarkamal. No poem was so great a favorite. We hear of it in Iceland as well as in Denmark; the skald of Olaf the Saint intones it before the battle of Stiklastad (1030), and it resounds in the heroic poetry of Norway as well as in one of the folk songs of the Faroe Islands. The song of praise which Biarki and Hialti chant here about their king, in their last hard fight, determines his fame for all time. His renown as a hero remains the centre and standard of the contents of the saga. His character is felt as a paragon for the kings of historic times.\*

The Biarkamal is, likewise, our oldest Scandinavian source, and as such is a key to the genesis of the entire body of heroic poetry. The song not only depicts the last struggle about Leire castle; but allusion is made in its dialogues to many previous events. From the song we can therefore gather a number of points concerning Hrolf's history.

1. Hrolf slays the cowardly and avaricious king Hroerik and distributes his gold among his own men.

\* Cf. below, "The Later History of the Biarkamal" and "The Name of the Biarkamal."

2. Biarki, one of Hrolf's heroes, overcomes a king's son, Agnar Ingialdson, after a desperate struggle.

3. Hrolf makes an expedition to Sweden, in all probability against King Athisl, and in the course of it strews gold on the plain of Fyrisvellir.

4. Hrolf is attacked in Leire during the night by his thane Hiarvarth, supported by an army from Svealand and Gautland; after making brave resistance, Hrolf and his men fall; during the battle the castle is burned down.

Of each of these episodes the poem allows us only a glimpse suggested by the action, without giving any account of the motives of the actors or their relations to one another. Even concerning Hiarvarth's sudden attack we are told but very little; the poet presupposed that both his relation to Hrolf and his having an army of stranger warriors at his disposal was known to his audience.

Now, when endeavoring to fill in the details of these meagre hints, the most obvious course to pursue would seem to be to consult the later Scandinavian traditions. But we shall soon find that they differ about as much as possible, both as regards the relationship of the personages and the political conditions. Now and then we see that not one of the varying accounts furnishes a satisfactory explanation by itself. In such cases we must consult the very oldest tradition, the Anglo-Saxon poems. If we read the Biarkamal with them in mind, we arrive at a different understanding of all the events. This new interpretation is in several points both simpler and the one most acceptable.

The narrative of the Biarkamal about the avaricious Hroerik is given by Saxo as follows: "Let us draw up our host in firm array as Hrolf has taught us, he that overcame Hroerek the niggardly son of Baug and sent the wretch to Hel . . . ; he preferred gold to warfare and, poor in renown, he piled up heaps of precious metal which he would not consent to distribute among high-born friends. When Hrolf visited him with his fleet the miser let his slaves take his gold from out of the chests and strew it before the gates of the city; deserted of warriors he preferred to save himself from his foeman by gifts rather than by arms. . . . But the wise ruler rejected his gifts and deprived him both of his treasures and of his life; his niggardly foe derived no advantage from his slowly accumulated treasure; Hrolf took the hoard of his slain foe and dealt out among his friends all that miserly hands had gathered in so many years; he entered into the rich stronghold and gave his own followers glorious booty without loss of blood."\*

All the Scandinavian sources tell about a King Hroerek among Hrolf's contemporaries. The Danish sources give him the epithet of *slanganbøghi* (or, rather, *slænganbøghi*), i.e., he who throws away his gold rings. The Icelanders, on the other hand, know, as living in those times, one Hroerekr *hnøggvanbaugi*, i.e., he who is miserly with his rings; whereas they call his grandson Hroerekr *sløngvanbaugi*, i.e., he who throws away rings. Both names excellently fit the king Hroerek of the song, who for a long time hoards his gold and finally strews it out as booty for his foeman. There can, therefore, be no

\* See Latin text, 12a and foll.

doubt that he is the same personage as the King Hroerek of the Biarkamal.

But not all the various accounts in the later traditions agree with the Biarkamal. In all of them Hroerek is consistently described as the king who followed Hrolf (thus Sven Aggison, Saxo, *Skiöldungasaga*). Those sources that give a detailed account of him describe him as a warlike ruler; Saxo tells about his victorious fights with the Wends, the *Skiöldungasaga*, about his slaying King Hroar and, after the death of Hrolf, of a stubborn fight for his kingdom. Concerning Hroerek's origin, the sources show the most violent contradictions. Saxo makes him a son of King Hqthr: Sven calls him a son of the great Hrolf kraki; the *Skiöldungasaga* and *Langfeðgatal*, a son of Ingiald. All of these genealogies are impossible. Least of all, of course, can Hrolf himself be the father of his enemy. Hqthr (Baldr's slayer) is nowhere else mentioned in popular tradition; only in Saxo's genealogies (and in the pedigrees which are based on him) is he at all introduced into the line of the Danish kings. To the warlike race of Ingiald, who have been engaged for a generation in fighting the sons of Halfdan, this contemptible King Hroerek cannot belong, either; he has not even a bodyguard about him. His very name is, in fact, impossible in that race, since it does not agree with the system of naming customary in the oldest times.

We shall not omit to mention that we recognize the character of Hroerek sløngvanbaugi in the story of Hrok (*Hrolfssaga*) who from envy of his uncle, King Hroar, hurls his ring into the sea and who, later, sur-



prises and overcomes King Hroar in battle; in revenge for which deed he is captured and mutilated by Helgi. This Hrok, then, is neither king, wealthy, unwarlike, nor is he slain by Hrolf! The tale is but one more attempt to make a place for Hroerek in the line of the Scyldings and to explain his epithet of the "ring-hurler." The Biarkarimur have a similar story about Hroerek, son of Ingiald.

From this hodgepodge of later Scandinavian traditions we turn to the epic of Beowulf, in order to arrive at clarity about Hroerek's descent. Its answer is simple and satisfying: Hrethrik (*Hrærekr*) is the son of King Hrothgar (*Hrógar*); Hrothulf (*Hrólf*), however, is the king's nephew, and has already participated in the mighty battles with the Heathobards as co-adjutor or co-regent ("then was there 'still' peace among the race of the Scyldings"); but when Hrethric ascended the throne there arose discord of which the ultimate termination can scarcely be doubtful. So far the information in Beowulf. The immediate continuation may be read out of the Biarkamal: Hroerek remains at home in the castle inherited from his father with all the treasure; Hrolf comes sailing with his army (presumably the bodyguard of the Scyldings and the other Danish warriors who were accustomed to follow him against the Heathobards); Hroerek has his gold borne to the gates of the castle in order to purchase peace; but Hrolf refuses his offer and slays him, thereupon dividing the treasure among his own warriors.

The poet of Beowulf probably could have told us what circumstances caused this war, had it been in his

plan to do so; as it is, we must be satisfied with slight hints. Appearances seem to indicate that Hrolf's attack on Hroerek's stronghold was a *coup d'état* which gave the power to that one of the two heirs to the throne who had the stronger army. Such an action does not, to be sure, agree with the irreproachable character which later tradition assigns to Hrolf; but we must remember that it is precisely this tradition which omits the attack on Hroerek. On the other hand, it is not so incomprehensible that the real Hrothulf (*Hrólf*) who crushed the worst enemies of Denmark, the Heathobards, was capable of such a deed, and that the old warriors of the Scyldings should assist him in it. Considering the continuous struggle against the bitter traditional enemy of his people, there was not time for a division of its power or for a lasting fight about it; the power had to be collected in one hand, and quick action was necessary to prevent the Heathobards from taking advantage of the dissension among the Danes. And on a point like this the ethics of antiquity differed widely from that of our own times: it was the business of a king with generous gifts of gold to collect a large host of warriors and to lead them to combat and victory. Both the Biarkamal and Beowulf teach this principle, and with equal emphasis; in fact, if there was one point the skalds of all northern Europe were agreed on, it was this teaching.

Read with the older sources in mind, the account of the fall of Hroerek as given by the Biarkamal is seen to be not only a tribute of praise to Hrolf, but likewise a piece of polemics. Why should the hero shrink from

slaying his own cousin and co-regent, if by doing so he was able to collect a greater army and lead it to mightier achievements ?

As an event in Danish history, Hrolf's attack on Hroerek seems to be the dark spot in the career of the hero king. But, as I have pointed out, one will judge it less harshly if one bears in mind what deeds were perpetrated by his contemporaries throughout Europe. The period was one instinct with insatiable lust for power and thirst for riches; in its stormy waves the feelings of kinship and right were bound to become weakened.

In a more superficial way, also, the Hroerek episode is paralleled by the conditions of the times. The enormous royal treasures of gold collected together, only to become booty for the enemy, call to mind the great treasures of the Teutonic nations during the period of the Migration of Nations, as, e.g., the immense royal treasure of the Vandals which Belisarius captured and brought to Constantinople, and the great hoards of the royal castles of the Ostrogoths and Visigoths.\* The story of Ermanric the Goth's treasures travelled as far as Denmark; and the treasures of the Nibelungs and the Rhinegold are essential in the poetry of the times. The Norse Viking Period, to be sure, shows greed for gold, but less tendency to hoard it. Ragnar lothbrok invades the dragon's lair, but leaves no heaps of gold to his sons. When King Magnus lay on his deathbed (1047) and Harold harthrathi asked him where was the

\* Dahn, *Urgeschichte der germanischen Völker*, i, 190, 201; Prokopius, *Historia*, i, c. 12 (The royal treasure of the Visigoths in Carcassonne).

gold he had brought with him from Greece, Magnus answered: "Look along the sides of my ships, which are manned with doughty warriors; to them I gave the gold and received their love in return." Hroerek's hoard, on the other hand, points back to the more self-seeking royal power of the period of the Migration of Nations. In our song — possibly also in reality — Hrolf kraki seems to lead the way to the later and more popular conception of royal power.

One objection may still be raised against my understanding of Hroerek's origin; but, even if well-grounded, it will concern only his rôle in the Biarkamal, not his position in history. Saxo's rendition of the song defines him, not as the son of Hroar but, on the contrary, as the "son of the avaricious Baug" (*qui natum Boki Roricum stravit avari*). But this "avaricious Baug" is a very doubtful legendary character. In the first place, Baug is scarcely ever found as a name.\* in the second, it was not the father at all, but the son who showed himself avaricious. The contradiction is resolved if one translates Saxo's Latin back to Old Danish: *hins nygga Bøks* (Old Norse: *hnøggva Baugs*) evidently contains in disguise King Hroerik's epithet *hnøggvanbaugi*, perhaps

\* An epithet *baugr* is found (in Jæmtland; K. Rygh, *Tilnavne*; most likely from this epithet the place names *Bøjstrup* in East Jutland, *Baugstadhir* (Bogstad near Kristiania; Rygh, *Norske gårdnavne*, ii, 310; *ibid.*, *Personnavne* 31) and *Baugstaðir* in Iceland. The last mentioned is said to owe its origin to the settler *Baugr*; but as such a name is not found otherwise, it probably was an epithet to begin with. A name \**Baugi* may be in a couple of Norwegian farm names (*N. g.*, i, 215). A legendary Danish king, Bøgi, filius Dani (*SRD*, i, 15; *Saksnes oldh.*, i, 102), is of a very dubious origin; neither does it correspond exactly to Saxo's Bøki. It appears in a single patronymic (Einar Baughason, 1369); limited to the Middle Ages and to the South and the West of Norway (cf. Lind, *Norsk-isl. dopnamn*, p. 115) — also, probably, an epithet elevated to full name.

in the strong declension form *\*hnøggvanbaugs*. Instead of "the avaricious son of Baug" we ought, therefore, to insert "the ring-greedy Hroerik" in the Biarkamal, which gives a much better reading.\*

However, whether this emendation be accepted or no, our investigation has shown that all Northern accounts of Hroerik slænganbøghi or hnøggvanbaugi give but an incorrect explanation of his appearance in the Biarkamal and that the only correct and connected account is furnished by the English epic.

The poetic contrast to the weak Hroerik is seen in the hero whom only the strength of Biarki can overcome and who dies laughing — Agnar Ingialdson. The song has put the detailed description of this combat into Biarki's mouth. He mentions his own short sword Snirtir, which procured him the name of a great warrior when he slew Agnar the son of Ingiald, "he broke Hœking, his sword notched by blows, when he struck my head with it; a greater wound had it given me, had its edge been sharper; but I hewed off his left hand, part of his left side, and his right leg; my cutting blade plunged in through his ribs. Never have I, forsooth, beheld any one more brave! Nigh unto death he sat, propped on his hand, laughing at death, with laughter he entered Valhalla (*Elysium orbis*)."<sup>1</sup> Biarki continues that now also he has felled a young prince with a blow through shield and breast plate. The Hrolfssaga's ac-

\* The same supposition was made, independently of me, by G. Sarrazin in his above mentioned article (*Engl. Stud.*, xxiv, 144). It is corroborated still further by the fact that the text from which Saxo translated, must have had the word *hnøgg* for 'avaricious' since it alliterates with Hroerik. (Concerning the Danish form of this word, see Kalkar, *Ordbog til det ældre danske sprog*, iii, 245, sub *nygger*).

count of the Biarkamal likewise mentions this combat: *ek drap Agnar berserk ok eigi siðr konung, ok er þat verk haft í minnum*. The saga is also familiar with the more detailed description of the battle, but incorrectly understands it as belonging to Biarki's struggle against Hiarvarth.

Both in the Danish and the Icelandic tradition the fall of Agnar is brought into connection with a circumstance referred to in another part of the song, that Biarki is married to Hrolfs' sister (his daughter, according to the saga). Intrinsically it is not unlikely that the hero who in the song is said to be poor from birth and to have attained prosperity only through Hrolf must have performed some particularly great deed to win the king's sister. On this point the later sources go back to some ancient tradition, or at any rate, some correct commentary on the song.

As to the details of the fight with Agnar, the Danish and the Icelandic traditions are entirely at variance. From the Danish account in Saxo we learn (1) that Biarki slew Agnar in single combat, (2) that the combat was fought in Hrolf's hall, (3) that Agnar was celebrating his marriage with Hrolf's sister, when Biarki slew him and himself won the bride; and (4) that Biarki had provoked the fight by hurling back a gnawed-off bone at the head of one of the warriors. All we can say about this account is that it contains a commentary on the battle scene in the song, one of great age, or, perhaps, one made to suit the occasion. It would be a surer criterion of age if the tradition gave some information as to who this Agnar is who proves to be so

indomitable a warrior. But Saxo tells us nothing about him.

The Icelandic tradition as found in the accounts based on the *Skiöldungasaga* collects all the enemies of the race of Hrolf into one family group: Frothi, Hroerik, Ingiald, Agnar, and makes them a branch of the Scyldings constantly struggling against the race of Halfdan. There is at least some system in this, but rather too much system to have originated in genuine tradition. Still less acceptable is the account of the *Hrolfssaga*, which runs directly counter to the evidence of the *Biarkamal* and makes Agnar the son of Hroar (*Hróðgár*).

The Icelandic tradition has a description of the battle which differs from that of Saxo. It is found in the *Biarkarímur*, which are based on the *Skiöldungasaga*. The fierce warrior Agnar collects a fleet and sails to Denmark in order to regain his father Ingiald's kingdom. In Zealand there is fought a great battle between Hrolf and himself. Agnar is about to annihilate Hrolf's army when the king calls for Biarki, who then assumes the shape of a white bear. Agnar hews at the bear's brow, but his sword snaps; at the same moment Biarki stands before him in human shape and plunges his sword Laufi through him. Agnar dies laughing; but Hrolf makes Biarki a present of twelve estates and gives him his daughter in marriage. Again we ask: is this an old tradition, or is it only an amplification of the account given in the *Biarkamal*? For the author of the saga certainly seems to have known the song. However that be, the transformation into a bear is seen to be an innovation when compared with the plainer and more natural description in the *Biarkamal*.

Considering this diversity among the later sources, it is safest not to rely on any one of them, but to follow the Biarkamal itself. We can deduce two points from it. First, that Biarki in all probability received the princess and the estates as a reward for his prowess; and second, that Agnar is the son of Ingiald and therefore of royal race. Concerning the struggle between the two, we are not informed whether it was a single combat or an episode in a general battle. By reason of analogous events in the poems about Starkath we may surmise, however, that the combat took place in a pitched battle; as in Starkath's single combat with Geigath (Saxo, p. 279) and with Haki (Saxo, p. 388); and especially the *Víkarsbolk* description of his struggle with Sisar in the battle near the Vener lake (*Fas.*, iii, 24) which certainly seems an imitation of this passage of the Biarkamal.\* This conception of the single combat between two champions as part of a larger battle seems to be the most satisfactory; for the fact is that the old heroic poetry is by far more sparing in its use of the "holmgang" than are the medieval prose sagas. If we are satisfied to decide the issue by the help of the Biarkamal alone, we do best to think it an episode in some battle between the armies of Hrolf and Ingiald.†

Scanning the English epics for information about Agnar, the son of Ingiald, one can scarcely be in doubt

\* Cf. on this group of single combats, *Danmarks Heltedigtning*, ii, c. 15. In all cases, the action is, possibly, derived at first or second hand from the Biarkamal. Nevertheless, the Starkath lays have an independent value as a commentary on the famous poem, dating back to the eleventh century and being born of a living connection with the old heroic poetry.

† The similarity in national custom to an episode in *Beowulf* points the same way: the brothers Wulf and Eofor overcome the Swedish King Ongen-



very long where to look for it. Ingiald, Hrolf's main adversary, is king of the Heathobards. If we give credence to Widsith, his power was finally crushed in the bloody battle before, or in, Heorot; in which case we must think that the Biarkamal reproduces a single episode, the one in which the foremost warrior of the Heathobards falls. On the other hand, starting from Beowulf, the action would seem to represent part of the rekindled war against the Heathobards, when the Agnar episode would stand for the great defeat of the Heathobards which (probably) brought the war to a close. However, these chronological details (discussed in Chapter I) are without larger significance. On the final victory of the Danes the English sources agree with one another and with the Agnar episode.

The question which not any one of the later sources was able to answer, as to why, and how, there arose a hero so mighty in his strength and his contempt for death, is answered by this ancient tradition. It was the life and death struggle between the Danes and the Heathobards, and therefore was it so desperate a matter, and also the reward of victory so great.

Again, then, the Biarkamal affords us views on both sides. On the one we see the products of the later periods of literature with their more highly colored details; on the other, older and more historic poems which explain situations and persons in a more satisfactory manner.

theow in battle; "that fight rewarded the ruler of the Geats, the son of Hrethel, with abundance of treasures, the time he returned; to each of them he gave a hundred thousand of land and of woven rings, . . . and to Eofof he gave his only daughter, to the honor of his house, for a pledge of allegiance" (Beowulf, ll. 2992-2999; cf. Bugge, PBBeitr., xii, 19).

Hrolf's expedition to Upsala is painted in brighter and more cheerful colors. "Frothi's scion smiles, he that sowed gold on the *Fyre Plains*," as Saxo has it in his rendition of the Biarkamal.\* Even if we did not have the unanimous testimony of the later sources, we would not for one moment be in doubt about the connection: the King threw away his treasures on his flight, in order to save himself from the pursuit of his enemies. With this compare Saxo's account of King Frothi's warriors who cast away their loot and afterwards turn and fall upon their pursuers when they are loaded down (a Norwegian viking-tale);† likewise, in real history, Harold harthrathi who, when pursued by Svein Estrithson, threw his booty into the water (*Heimskringla*, 573); or Orm kingsbrother who strews out his silver treasure when fleeing from the Birchlegs (*Sverrissaga*, c. 51). Since the occurrence is told with marks of pride, the pursuing enemy must have had the worst of it.

The political connection of the expedition to Upsala is made out differently according to whether we consult the later Scandinavian sources, which are virtually unanimous on this point, or accept the testimony of Beowulf. According to the Scandinavian tradition, Hrolf pays a rather peaceful visit to King Athisl of Upsala, who has married his mother Yrsa. This account abounds in fabulous details: Hrolf's relation to

\* P. 99: *Frothonis video lætum arridere nepotem, qui Sirtvallinos* (emend to read: *Furivallinos*) *auro consererat agros*. The Icelandic text of the song perhaps (though this is very doubtful) contained a verse that set Biarki in special connection with the expedition to king Athisl (*Hrólfs*., p. 106). Moreover, it contains the name of Athisl in the introductory stanza, where Hrolf's warriors are addressed as *allar hinir æztu Aðils um sinnar*.

† Saxo, *Book II*, p. 78.

his mother, who was obliged to leave his father after their consanguinity had been discovered; Athisl's attempts at treason against Hrolf and his warriors; and finally Hrolf's mocking words of farewell to Athisl who is pursuing him. From Beowulf we may gather, on the other hand, not the story of Hrolf's expedition to Upsala (for the poem does not, of course, contain the single events of his history), but the general political situation which occasioned the enterprise. We see Sweden torn by struggles among relatives for the throne, and they appeal to the neighboring nation for help. We see Ali (*Onela*) drive away his brother's son Athisl (*Éadgils*) who afterwards returns with the help of the "Geatas" slays his uncle and gains the kingdom. The race of the Scyldings was particularly concerned in these events, for Hroar's only sister was married to one of the contemporaneous Swedish kings. To whom, we do not know with certainty, as the passage is corrupted in the only manuscript that has come down to us. But it is the general opinion among investigators that it was precisely this King Ali, and that *elan cwén* is to be emended to *Onelan cwén*, "Ali's spouse." If this reading is the correct one we get an explanation of Hrolf's hostile relations with Athisl: he intends to give support to his uncle, or still more probably, to undertake an expedition to avenge his death.

Hrolf's fall at Leire is the main subject of the Biarkamal. For this reason it describes this battle more fully; but its account is not entirely satisfactory. We hear almost nothing about the earlier history of that struggle, its cause and the preparations for it. We gather only

that it is fought by night, and with great hosts; we are told by Saxo \* that Hiarvarth commits the deed in obedience to the desire of his ambitious wife Skuld, and that it is treason — treason against his sworn liege-lord. His troops are Gauts and Swedes:† Hiarvarth heads them as they press on and after a stubborn fight burst through the castle gate. Hrolf's warriors continue to fight even after the fall of their lord, until the last of them succumb. The castle is fired — so it seems — by Hrolf's own warriors. The later Scandinavian tradition is best informed about the matter of Hiarvarth's and Skuld's treason. All means at hand are employed in order to make their perfidy seem as base a piece of villainy as possible. (1) It is treason against a near kinsman, since Skuld is Hrolf's sister; (2) It is treason against their sworn lord, for her husband is Hrolf's earl (*comes*, *præfectus* in the Danish sources), or a king tributary to him (according to the Icelandic tradition); (3) Hiarvarth and Skuld are invited to banquet with Hrolf, and when bringing their tribute to the castle they find opportunity to smuggle their warriors in. This last point is told in detail in the diverse sources. The Icelanders know even what Skuld busies herself with during the battle: she calls her dead warriors back to life by magic, and practises sorcery in order to harm Hrolf. All these personal relations are, as usual, recounted very fully in the later traditions. On the other hand, the

\* Saxo's rendition of this passage (stanza 7) is rather free so that it may answer to the conception of a later period. However, considering the trend of the poem, which amounts to a glorification of loyalty to one's king, an act of treachery such as this would well fit in its scheme.

† *Sæci* and *Gothi* (stanza 6), *Gothi* (stanza 26–27), *Sæcticus hostis* (stanza 30). The saga does not specify the nationality of the troops.

sources are hard put to it when an explanation becomes necessary why Hiarvarth appears with an army of Swedes and Gauts. Those most popular in origin offer no guidance whatever: Hiarvarth is an earl in Scania (*Leire Chronicle*), or only a "powerful king" Hrolf has subdued (*Hrólfs saga*). Saxo is the only one who tackles the question squarely; he makes Hiarvarth earl in Sweden after Athisl's death. This Danish earldom in Sweden is, to be sure, a very bold idea. And Saxo damages the credibility of his account by mentioning Athisl as living after Hrolf's fall. Finally, there is the *Skiöldungasaga*, which makes Hiarvarth Hrolf's tributary king in the Baltic island of Øland. It would seem as if the author of this saga — with the same pedantry characterizing his working together of differing accounts — went out of his way to look for some piece of land belonging to the later Swedish realm that might not belong to Athisl's kingdom. Neither does this source explain how Gauts and Swedes come to make up Hiarvarth's army. It seems indeed rather far-fetched to make Øland appear independent of Sweden.

The only hint the later Scandinavian sources give is that found in the *Leire Chronicle* and the *Skiöldungasaga*, which tell us that Skuld is the daughter of Yrsa and the Swedish king Athisl. But it is nowhere specifically stated that she brought Swedish troops to the attack; in general, she is never mentioned in connection with Upsala but only with the Skyldings; the *Leire Chronicle* names Skuldelev in Zealand as her residence.

Taking everything into consideration, we must say that the later accounts which fill in the poetical outlines

of the battle at Leire in so spirited a manner had little or no comprehension of the historic situation that was present to the poet of the Biarkamal.

The connection is grasped better by comparing Beowulf, that is to say, the political situation which is the background of that epic. There, we would not be surprised to see an aspirant to the Danish throne attack the royal castle with a Swedish army; for we remember that the poem tells how the Swedish king Athisl ascended the throne by help of an army of Geatas. It would in no wise be more strange that a Swedish king should attempt a similar attack on the Danish kingdom. More unmistakably still, the Biarkamal itself explains the Swedish and Gautish troops as a retaliation for Hrolf's expedition to Upsala.

That Hiarvarth should have any right to the Danish throne is said neither by the Biarkamal nor by the later accounts; but Beowulf has more explicit information on that point. Hiarvarth is the son of Hroar's and Helgi's older brother, and has therefore a right to the throne which is as good as, if not better than, Hrolf's. The latter had been able to support his prerogative by his greater power or his popularity among the people or the troops, and by his victory over the enemies of the realm. Hiarvarth's attack on Leire nevertheless (if we may rely on Saxo's version of the Biarkamal) is an act of treason against his sworn lord. He must have done homage to his relative and, possibly, received a fief from him.

We have now examined the historic contents of the Biarkamal; and we have found that the poem looks

## 84 THE HEROIC LEGENDS OF DENMARK

two ways. Its brief hints about the course of events may be filled in, on the one hand, by help of the later Scandinavian tradition; on the other — to form an altogether different picture to be sure — by the older tradition which found its way to the Anglo-Saxons. The *Biarkamal* stands at the parting of the ways. But there is this difference, that the later tradition contains not only a number of topics unknown to the *Biarkamal*, but also furnishes deficient or incorrect historic information about other matters. The *Biarkamal*, on the contrary, contains nothing — as far as we may judge from its translation — which contradicts the tradition of *Beowulf*; and the themes which occur in the *Biarkamal* correspond exactly to those of the English epic. *Hrolf* stands in the same relation to other personages in both poems: victorious over his external enemies, King *Ingiald* and his hosts; superior in internal conflict to his cousin *Hroerek* who, notwithstanding his weakness, has been elevated to the throne; but having also the liability of a rival arising against him in the shape of his other cousin *Hiarvarth* who had been passed by in the succession; even the connection of the house of the *Scyldings* with the turbulent royal race of Sweden does not seem to be lacking.

It is evident, then, that the *Biarkamal* keeps more closely to the older tradition. In saying so I do not mean that the poet of the *Biarkamal* understood every situation and every family connection just as the poet of *Beowulf* did; at any rate, I cannot prove that he did. It is possible, of course, that the poet, as well as the later sources, confused external enemies (*Frothi*,

Ingiald) with Hrolf's adversaries among the Scyldings (Hroerek). It is possible that he does not keep Hiarvarth in his proper place among the Scyldings, since Skuld's ambition is made the spring of his action. In this particular, then, the Biarkamal would not point toward the past but also toward later developments. However, I am of the opinion that the Biarkamal at all events is based on an older Danish song which in point of tradition comes close to the English account and was not far removed in time from the real battles of the Scyldings.

## 2. A RESTORATION OF THE BIARKAMAL

It grieves me to say it: the old Biarkamal, the most beloved and most honored of songs in all the North, is not known to us in the form it had when it was sung to our forefathers. The present reader is in the beggarly position of one who must form a conception of the old poem with the help of a Latin translation, a second-hand narrative, and some few detached verses. And yet, much more may be known about the song than most would believe.

We may not only recognize, here and there, scenes and phrases as genuinely belonging to it, or glean — in the way we have just done — a certain amount of historical information from the poem. He who devotes himself to a prolonged study of the scattered fragments will succeed in bringing the old poem to light, even there where it would seem most plastered over and disfigured. It may be restored by making use of all sources and studying how to make the most of each, and especially by comprehending the excellences and the short-



comings of each. The old song will gradually come to life again as we, starting from the facts established, live ourselves into the Biarkamal's world of thought.

Saxo takes highest rank among our sources; only an exaggerated evaluation of Icelandic tradition has, until recent times, kept us from recognizing this. One was merely swamped by his wordiness, without appreciating his great excellences. He is the only one who reproduces the poem in its entirety and thereby enables us to form an idea of its structure. He allows us to see that the poem, in a kind of dramatic form, unfolds with shifting scenes the action of the whole conflict, from its beginnings to its end. Even its external form is not as unrecognizable as it may appear. Now, an Old Norse proverb may be pointed out, now a group of alliterating words is so evident that one can almost be sure of the exact words of the original. On the other hand, Saxo's additions are readily distinguished, e.g., his constant tendency to dwell on a thought, once it has impressed him, and to repeat and amplify it. Some thoughts there are also, perhaps, in which he has crystallized some peculiar conception of life of Teutonic antiquity; still, these betray their recent origin by their more abstract form. But from out of his cloud of words there shine forth all the genuine old expressions, in their realistic freshness, bearing the stamp of a home-grown civilization as shown in the hearty life of the bold "housecarls," not as it is represented by an admiring historian.

The Icelandic Hrolfssaga in one of its closing chapters describes the battle at Leire. A part of this is in the usual manner of the sagas, another contains some

rather long speeches which to a large extent prove identical with the song Saxo knew. This saga is thus a help toward getting at the real basis of his Latin poem. However, the saga teller handles his material so freely that we would find great difficulty in determining on the contents of the song from its testimony alone; and still less is it suited to establish the consecutive order of the various parts, as the same thought may occur twice, with other matter interposed, and as pieces which in Saxo belong together in contents may be separated by some long narrative in the saga. Likewise, the Icelandic saga teller knew a text of the song in which large pieces of Saxo's account were lacking, some of which contained portions that for historical reasons must be considered very old.

Finally, we possess six stanzas of the Biarkamal itself, scattered in Icelandic texts. Being the only specimens we have of the versification and phraseology of the original, they are invaluable; also, for furnishing us guidance in detecting other heroic songs that resemble the Biarkamal in matter and manner. On the other hand, their importance is lessened by the fact that only one, or at most two, of these twelve half-stanzas are recognizable in Saxo's text, and that they contain features which but poorly agree with his poem. We must, therefore, divide these fragments into two groups: on the one side the one or two half-stanzas which are certainly parts of the real Biarkamal; on the other, all the other stanzas whose origin we shall presently investigate.

What results can we obtain from this material? We can obtain a poetic restoration of the Biarkamal, one

which I believe in the main correct. From out of Saxo's wordy invention we may hear a considerable number of weighty and characteristic lines. By the aid of some familiarity with Old Norse poetry we shall be able to determine the matter of each stanza, frequently even of every half-stanza or long-line; precisely in this respect the Hrolfssaga affords us excellent help. From the songs of the Edda and the lays related to them in character, we may borrow expressions and color. To be sure, there is not sufficient actual material to compose the poem in Old Norse or Old Danish; any attempt in that direction would soon betray its unnatural origin. But we may be able to reproduce the old lay in the somewhat freer form which the modern idiom puts at our disposal. It furnishes a medium close enough to the old original to show each genuine alliteration we may discover, and at the same time flexible enough not to bind us in words or phrases where we can be sure only of the general nature of the thought.

I offer in this place my attempt to reproduce the song, the fruit of labor continued through a number of years to grasp its spirit and to give it form. Thirty years or a century from now, there may be some one who will do this more perfectly; but it is my opinion that I am able to teach people of my own time how the song is to be understood.

In a certain sense my task is simple enough: to restore as closely as possible the text in which the Biarkamal was known to Saxo. The losses or alterations that it has met with in oral tradition cannot be considerable. I am not required to improve on the poem such as he

heard it; in itself it is characteristic, picturesque, and full enough.

The lay consists throughout of dialogue and has, therefore, a sort of dramatic structure. From slight hints one must gather the facts about the changing scenes and the advancing action, from the very beginning of the battle until the last of the warriors drops dying among the corpses. All the fluctuating fortunes of the fight are reflected in the dialogue (it is noteworthy, though, that the fall of Hrolf is mentioned with curious brevity in the scene of the struggle at the castle gate). As a finale, Othin is imagined to be riding over the battle field, in order to take with him the fallen; he who peers through his bent arm can see him, just as one by this means may catch sight of ghosts. But all this happens in the background of the scene; the actors themselves are few in number and their figures sharply outlined.

The *dramatis personæ* are as few as possible. Two leading characters, the young hero Hialti and the old warrior Biarki; as subordinate character, Hrut who is Biarki's wife and Hrolf's sister; as mute personages, the warriors, Hrolf's housecarls, who now are near by, now are scattered in the distance and who gradually succumb.

A certain tension is produced by Biarki for a long time lying in a kind of profound sleep, doubtless superinduced by magic. It seems as if the treacherous enemies have cast a spell over the strong hero, in order to overcome Hrolf; Hialti's powerful call rouses him, too late to save the king's life, but still in time to avenge his death and to honor his memory with deeds.

THE BIARKAMAL

HIALTÍ

1. Awake, arise,  
rally, friends!  
all ye foremost  
athelings of Hrolf!  
Awake not to wine,  
nor to your wives' converse,  
but rather to Gondul's  
game of war.

BIARKI (to the thrall)

2. Take the fardel of fagots  
to kindle the fire!  
Brush thou the hearth  
and blow in the embers!  
Let the kindling crackle  
to kindle the logs:  
'tis winsome with warm hand  
to welcome friends.

HIALTÍ

3. Our great-hearted king  
gave to his housecarls  
rings, helms, short-swords,  
and shining mail-coats;  
his gifts in peace  
must be gained in war;  
in war is proved  
what was pledged over ale.
4. The ruler of Danes  
chose him the doughty;  
courage is known  
when the craven flee;  
in the tumult of battle

he needs trusty fighters:  
conquest follows king  
who may count on his men.

5. Hold firm your hilts,  
ye chosen housecarls,  
shield flung on shoulder  
to show ye are men;  
breast open 'gainst breast  
offer we to our foemen:  
beak against beak,  
so shall battle the eagles.

6. Foremost among fighters  
bold Hiarvarth fares,  
glorying in sword-play,  
in gold-helm dight;  
after him are marching  
martial hosts of Gauts,  
with ring-laid helms  
and rattling spears.

7. Skuld egged him on,  
the Scylding queen,  
to his kin to be false,  
his king to betray;  
raving she is  
and bereft of reason,  
by evil norns /  
for ill created.

8. Now their last cup  
for king's men is poured,  
after his liege-lord  
shall no one live  
but he show him fearful  
and shrink from blows,  
or be too listless  
his lord to avenge.

9. Lift thou now, Hrut,  
thy light-haired brow,  
leave thy bower,  
for battle is nigh.

. . . . .  
. . . . .

the towers are tumbling,  
the castle-gates tremble.

10. Our byrnies are slit  
and sundered our limbs;  
blows of the bill  
have broken the king's shield;  
wide gapes the gate,  
and the gallant flee,  
the baleful battle-ax  
gnaws men's brows.

(Hialti fetches a firebrand to fire the castle. He discovers Hrut's husband in profound sleep.)

11. Bidest thou yet, Biarki,  
do sleep-runes bind thee?  
Come forth now with me  
ere thee fire assail!  
We fend off our foes  
as we do bears — with firebrands:  
the castle crumbles,  
the king's hall flames.

(Hialti again rallies his warriors.)

12. Let us rally our ranks  
as Hrolf us taught,  
the hero who hewed down  
the ring-hoarder.  
Wretched was Hroerek  
though he riches owned:  
but gold he gathered,  
not gallant men.

13. Hrolf harried on Hroerek.  
Then ransom he offered,  
before the gate disgorged  
his purse its gold:  
he strewed before stronghold  
stores of treasure,  
then was lavished on foe  
what on friends was saved.

14. Though our liege him slew:  
he allotted the hoard  
among faithful followers,  
refused it himself.  
Nothing him gladdened  
but he gave it to them:  
to award it to warriors,  
naught was too welcome.

15. The most large-hearted lord  
lifeless has sunk,  
lost is the life  
men will longest remember:  
he ran to the sword-play  
as river toward sea,  
fared against his foe  
like the fleet-footed stag.

16. A burn of blood  
from the battle-field flows,  
as Hiarvarth among hosts  
Hild's play speedeth.  
But the sword-giver smiles  
in his sleep of death,  
as at bountiful banquet  
he beakers emptied.

17. Frothi's kinsman  
on the Fyre Plains  
his gold rings sowed,



glad in his mind;  
him we joyfully follow  
on his journey to Hel,  
manly in speech  
and firm of mettle.

18. Blows of our brands  
shall back our faith.  
The glory of great deeds  
never is forgotten.  
Latched and locked  
the hall still is left.  
A third time, Biarki,  
I bid thee come forth!

BIARKI

19. Eagerly doest thou, Hialti,  
egg on Hrolf's kinsman,  
but to vaunting words  
fit valiant deeds.  
Bide thou whilst Biarki  
his byrnie fastens;  
little he lists  
to be burned alive.
20. On an isle was I born,  
barren and little;  
twelve demesnes gave me  
Hrolf to master  
(realms to rule  
and ruddy gold, too,  
his sister to wife;  
here's worth to requite).

(Biarki plunges into the battle.)

21. Shields on your shoulders  
if ye shun not death!  
Only the craven

covers him now.  
Bare your breasts!  
Your bucklers fling down!  
Gold-weighted arm  
the glaive best wields.

22. With my steel erst I struck  
the "wild stag" in battle,  
with my short-sword slew him  
which Snirtir is named.  
Hero's name had I  
when its hilt I gripped,  
when Agnar Ingialdsson's  
life I ended.

23. 'Gainst my head he hewed,  
but Hœking broke,  
on Bothvar's brow  
his blade was shattered;  
then raised I Snirtir,  
through his ribs I thrust,  
his left hand and right leg  
I lopped with one blow.

24. Never was there, I ween,  
a more war-like hero,  
than when, sword-hewn, sank  
the son of Ingiald:  
lifeless he lay  
and laughed toward death;  
to Valhalla's gates  
he gleefully hied him.

25. To his heart I hewed  
the hero but now,  
young in years  
but unyielding in spirit;  
through his buckler I battered,

naught booted him his hauberk:  
my Snirtir but seldom  
slackens its blow.

26. Guard you now, ye gallant  
Gautish chieftains!  
Athelings only  
enter this battle!

. . . . .  
. . . . .  
. . . . .  
. . . . .

27. His loved son now loses  
many a lord,  
but for barons, not bondmen  
Hel's bars will be lowered.  
More closely comes  
the clash of battle,  
three blows I get  
for one I give.

28. Alone in the strife  
I stand amongst the slain.  
A bulwark I build me,  
of fallen bodies.  
Where is now he  
who whetted me before,  
and tempted me sore  
as if twelve lives he had ?

#### HALTI

29. Few are the followers,  
but far I am not,  
strong is now need  
of stout-hearted men;  
battered is my buckler,  
broken and shattered;  
yourself may see it:

sight goes before hearsay.  
Doest thou battle now, Biarki,  
as thou bidedst before ?

BIARKI

30. Thy spiteful speech  
spurs me no longer,  
not I am the cause  
that tardy I came;  
a Swedish sword  
sorely has struck me;  
through my war-weeds it went  
as if water it cleft.

(Biarki's wife Hrut has found her mortally wounded husband on  
the battlefield where the conflict is now dying down.)

31. But where is Othin  
the one-eyed grey-beard ?  
Say now, Hrut, swiftly:  
Seest thou him nowhere ?

HRUT

32. Lower thy eye  
and look through my arm,  
sign then thy view  
with victory-runes:  
unscathed shalt thou, Biarki,  
then scan with thy glance  
and fasten thy eyes  
on the father of victory.

BIARKI

33. Could I fasten my eyes  
on Frigg's husband now,  
the swift shield-swinging  
and Sleipnir's rider,  
his life would lose  
the war-god at Leire,  
blood for blood then  
would Biarki crave.

**34. Here by my chieftain's  
head I shall sink now,  
thou by his feet  
shalt find thee a rest.  
Booty-seekers on battle-field  
'shall bear me out:  
the great-souled king's gifts  
e'en the dead forget not.**

**35. Soon greedy eagles  
will gorge on our bodies,  
ramping ravens  
will rend our limbs.  
To high-minded, hardy  
hero it is seeming  
dying to dwell  
by his king rich in deeds.**

## MATERIALS AND PARALLELS FOR THE RESTORATION OF THE BIARKAMAL

On the following pages the reader is furnished the aids for testing the correctness of the procedure in my attempt to restore the Biarkamal. Parallel with Saxo's text are printed the corresponding passages of the *Hrólfs saga*,\* together with the few stanzas of the Icelandic version of the Biarkamal which have come down to us. Also, parallel expressions from the ancient lays — (among the heroic lays especially the *Atlakviða*, and the *Hloðakviða* of the *Hervararsaga*, prove rich in interesting comparisons). Finally, I shall make use of my own remarks, especially whenever my rendering may lay claim to have greater or less probability.

With regard to Saxo's version, it is important to hold apart those passages which most evidently hark back to ancient poetry, as against those in which Saxo's own hand is evident. This is noticeable in transitions whose purpose is to introduce an all too sudden poetic thought, in reflective passages, and especially in thoughts which merely reëcho the note once struck.

In order to determine the contents of the lay we have — besides the general guidance of the terse and weighty style, and the parallel passages of the *Hrólfs saga* and other lays — the help of the following facts: every half-stanza is supposed to form a unit, both grammatically and logically; and furthermore, there is the criterion that the last two lines are frequently seen to be of a proverbial character if not actually proverbs.

While inviting the reader to test the correctness of my method I shall remind him that the discussion of a single isolated passage is of no value. There is but one safe way which is, first to solve the easiest questions and then to apply the results gained as to the character of the lay, and as to Saxo's method, to the solution of the more difficult problems.

\* Cited after Finnur Jónsson's edition (1904), but with page references to *Rafn, Fornaldarsögur*, i, (given on the margin of Jónsson's text).

SAXO'S LATIN TEXT OF THE BIARKAMAL  
(EXHORTATIONUM SERIES)<sup>1</sup>

HIALTO

- 1 a. *Ocius evigilet, quisquis se regis amicum*  
aut meritis probat, aut sola pietate fatetur.  
[Discussant somnum procures; stupor improbus absit;  
incaleant animi \* vigiles; sua dextera quemque \*\*  
aut famæ dabit aut probro perfundet inertem;  
noxque hæc aut finis erit aut vindicta malorum \*\*.]

<sup>1</sup> The marginal numbers indicate the passages which seem to correspond to the various stanzas of the original (the letters to the half-stanzas). Italics are used for lines corresponding to passages in the Hrolfssaga or the fragments. Expressions which for inner reasons must belong to the old lay are spaced. Straight brackets indicate Saxo's amplifications of the text. In the footnotes will be found a number of parallels from Latin authors who seem to have been Saxo's models. As to his text I am, through the help of my learned colleague and friend, Professor M. C. Gertz, frequently in the position of being able to give better readings than those furnished in the editions.

\* incaluere animi. Ovid, Met. 2, 87.

\*\* sua dextera cuique Aut modo finis erit aut ultio digna malorum. Galterus, Alexandreis, VI.

1 a. þormóðr settisk upp ok kvað hátt mjök svá at heyrði um allan herinn; hann kvað Biarkamál in fornu, ok er þetta upphaf: Dagr es upp kominn, dynja hana fjaðrar, mál es vílmögum at vinna erfiði; *vaki æ ok vaki vina hofuð, allir enir æztu Aðils of sinnar* (Heimskringla, Olafssaga helga, c. 208). There is nothing in Saxo's version answering to the first half-stanza. On the other hand, his beginning corresponds, both as to its general contents and certain expressions, to the second half-stanza (*vinir* = *quisquis se regis amicum*; *sinnar* = *procures*). *Aðils* is not mentioned by Saxo, and indeed, he is a strange person to find in this connection (cf. below on the Icelandic version of the Biarkamal). The text is doubtless corrupt here, cf. below.

1, 1. *Amici* (i.e. *vinir*, "friends") is in Saxo's Biarkamal the expression for the followers, the *drótt*, of the king, cf. stanza 1 and stanzas 12-14 (*ingenui amici, patrii amici, digni amici*; also once in his Ingiald lay, Saxo, p. 306); cf. *vina hofuð* in stanza 1 of the Icelandic version; this signification of *vinir* is not found otherwise in Old Norse (where, on the other hand, *vinr* is frequently used in expressions for "king").

1, 3. *Procures* is the most frequently used word for the king's followers in Saxo's Biarkamal and Ingiald lay (Saxo, pp. 304-306); it is, as the Icel. text of the Biarkamal suggests, a translation of *sinnar* (Old Norse "follower," but not in the special sense, Old Dan. *sinni* "follower, henchman") in Runic inscriptions; cf. Ags. *gesiðas*, etc. *Milites* and *satellites* (probably rendering Old Norse *hirðmenn*, "bodyguard," "king's men") frequently occur in the prose of Saxo, more rarely in the poetic portions.

Neither does it seem altogether accidental that some of the phrases of the Biarkamal are met with also in Danish Runic monuments of the tenth century: *sinni, hinn æxti* (see *Danske Studier*, 1905, 170, or Wimmer, *Danske runemindesmærker* (Students edition, 1914, glossary). The corrupted, or at any rate dubious, *hinir æztu Aðils of sinnar* possibly ought to be read *hins æxta aðalsinnar* "the right followers of the foremost (i.e. the king)"; cf. the Old Danish Runic *aðalmerki* "right or excellent monument."



- 1b. *Non ego virgineos jubeo cognoscere ludos,*  
*[nec feneras tractare genas, aut dulcia nuptis*  
*oscula conferre et tenues astringere mammas,]*  
*non liquidum captare merum, [tenerumve fricare*  
*femen et in niveos oculum jactare lacertos.]*  
*Evoco vos ad amara magis certamina Martis.*  
*[Bello opus est nec amore levi; nihil hic quoque facti*  
*mollities enervis habet; res proelia poscit.*  
*Quisquis amicitiam regis colit, arma capessat.*  
*Pensandis animis belli promptissima lanx \* est.*  
*Ergo viris timidum nihil aut leve fortibus insit,*  
*destituaturque animos armis cessura voluptas.*  
*In pretio jam fama manet, laudis sibi quisque*  
*arbiter esse potest propriaque nitescere dextra.*  
*Instructum luxu nihil adsit; plena rigoris*  
*omnia praesentem discant exsolvere cladem.*  
*Non debet laudis titulos aut praemia captans*  
*ignavo torpere metu, sed fortibus ire*  
*obvius et gelidum non expallescere ferrum.]*

Ad hanc vocem expergefactus BIARCO cubicularium suum  
 Scalcum, ocus excitatum, hoc alloquitur modo:

2. Surge puer, crebroque ignem spiramine pasce;  
 verre larem ligno et tenues dispelle favillas.  
 Scintillas extunde focis, ignisque jacentes  
 erige relliquias et opertas elice flammās.  
 Languenten compelle larem producere lumen,

\* laus editio Paris.; lanx Gertz.

- 1 b. *Hár enn harðgreipi,  
Hrólfur skjótandi,  
ættumgóðir menn,  
þeir's ekki flýja;  
vekkak yður at víni,  
né at vífs rúnum,  
heldr vek ek yður at hørðum  
Hildar leiki. (Heimskringla)*

Saxo does not know the first half-stanza, but the connection with the second is unquestionable. *Hrólfssaga*, p. 99: *Hjalti mælti: vakið, herra konungr, því[at] ófriður er í garðinum, ok er meiri þorð at berjaz en spennna konur*; p. 100: *Upp nú allir kapparnir, segir Hjalti, ok gerið skjótt at skilja við frillur yðar, því[at] annat liggr nú brynna fyrir, at búaz við því sem eptir ferr.*

The extent of the ensuing passage in Saxo might lead one to surmise that it stood for another stanza of the lay. However, it is not difficult to appreciate its thinness; for the most part it is a variation on the previous sentiments: *quisquis amicitiam regis colit*, line 15, = *quisquis se regis amicum fatetur*, line 1; and the speeches of exhortation against *voluptas* and *luxus* are an echo of *víni ok vífs rúnum*. Also, the poem would lose in effect if there were still other stanzas than those we have. The excellent effect is produced precisely by this short exhortation, interrupted immediately by a new voice calling (that of Biarki in stanza 2), and followed only then by the long exhortation to battle. The correctness of this sequence is confirmed still further by the similarity with the shifting voices in the beginning of the *Halfskviða*.

2. This stanza is found only in Saxo; but very probably — as above indicated — furnished the prototype for the beginning of the *Halfskviða*:

*Rykr um hauka  
í holl konungs, etc.*

Cf. below, Later History of the Biarkamal.

*Skalk* was understood by Saxo as a name (though in the text of the poem he is called *puer*), but it may also mean "servant," "thrall," as in the *Hlǫðskviða*:

*tólf hundruð skalka  
þeirra's skjöld bera;*

arenti \* rutilas accendens stipite prunas \*\*.  
 Proderit admota digitos extendere flamma.  
 Quippe calere manu debet, qui curat amicum,  
 et nocui penitus livoris pellere frigus.

## RURSUM HIALTO

- 3 a. *Dulce est nos domino percepta rependere dona.*  
 [En virtus sua quemque monet meritum bene regem  
 rite sequi dignaque ducem gravitate tueri,  
 acceptare enses, famæque impendere ferrum \*\*\*.]  
 Enses Theutonici, galeæ, armillæque nitentes,  
 loricæ talo immissæ, quas contulit olim  
 Rolvo suis, memores acuant in proelia mentes.
- b. Res petit et par est, quæcunque per otia summa  
 nacti pace sumus, belli ditione mereri,  
 nec lætos cursus moestis præponere rebus,  
 [aut duris semper casus præferre secundos.  
 Mente pari procures sortem capiamus utramque,  
 nec mores fortuna regat, quia condecet æque  
 delicias ac dura pati; vultuque sub illo  
 ducamus tristes, quo duces hausimus, annos.]  
 Omnia, quæ poti temulento prompsimus ore,  
 fortibus edamus animis [et vota sequamur  
 per summum jurata Jovem superosque potentes.]

\* arenti Gertz; ardenti P.

\*\* parvulus exusto remanebat stipite fomes  
 et cinis obductæ celabat lumina prunæ.  
 admovet his pronam submissa fronte lucernam  
 et producit acu stuppas umore carentis  
 excitat et crebris languentem flatibus ignem.

Vergil, Moretum 8-12; cf. Ovid, Met. 8,631 f.

\*\*\* Ordinem horum trium versuum restituit Gertz; 3. 1. 2, P.

and in Aes. *scealc* "henchman" (Beowulf). It was understood as a name by the poet of the Bravalla lay (Scalc Scanicus, Brav. stanza 2; from which Saxo in his Norn sagas). Scalc (as well as Scalco and compounds in -scalc, Scalc-) occurs in German, especially in Bavaria, as a man's name. (Förstemann, *Aldt. namenbuch*, i,<sup>2</sup> 1303.)

2, 1-2, cf. *Skírnisfgr* 1: *Rísðu nú, Skírnir, ok gakk (skjótt ?) at beiða* (cf. *Lokasenna* 10).

2, 7-8. In the old lay perhaps: *gott's varmri hendi vini at fagna*.

3. *Hrolfssaga*, p. 99: *þat er nú til, sagði Hjalti, at vér munum stýra liði konungs várs, er ekki neitt sparir við oss; efnum nú vel heitstrengningar várar at vér verjum vel hinn frægasta konung, sem nú er á öllum norðrlöndum, ok látum þat á hvert land spyrjaz mega, ok launum honum nú vápn ok herklæði, ok mart eptirlæti annat*.

*Enses Theutonicæ* = *saxsverð* (also in stanza 22, where it alliterates with *Snirtir* as here with *síð*). This word Saxo mistranslates "German swords." Its meaning in Old Norse is "short swords."

*Síðar brynjur* (*Guðrúnarhvöt* 7; used also by the scald *Sighvat*, eleventh century); *síðe byrnan* (*Beow.*, l. 1291);

*saxi ok með sverði,  
síðri brynju* (*Hljóðskviða*).

Saxo's introductory words are too abstract to be old. I propose — with considerable misgivings — to imitate the introduction to the gold stanzas in the Icelandic *Biarkamal* (*Snorri's Edda*, l. 400): *gramr enn gjöflasti gæddi hirð sína*. P. E. Müller was of the opinion (p. 93) that the three gold stanzas stood here in the Danish text used by Saxo. But there is not the slightest evidence for this; nor could, for that matter, a worse place be found for them than to insert them here, preceding the first passionate exhortation to seize arms.

3, 5-6. *Res petit et par est, quaecunque per otia summa nacti pace sumus, belli ditione mereri*. The thought is clear and essential, but the lines that follow are Saxo's own contemplations.

3, 7-8. The thought has a tang of antiquity and is in the form of a proverb, as is the case with a number of last lines in the *Biarkamal*. Cf. the modern Danish proverb: *Hvad drukken mand gør, skal ædru mand forsvare*, "what a man does when drunk, he is to stand for when sober" (*Mau, Dansk ordsprogsskat*, nr. 1371).

4. Danorum primus herus est meus; assit eidem,  
 ut probus est quisque! [Procul hinc, procul este, fugaces \*!]  
 forti opus est stabiliq[ue] viro, non terga ferente  
 in dubium bellive truces metuente paratus.  
 Maxima sæpe duci virtus ex milite pendet:  
 tanto etenim princeps aciem securior intrat,  
 quanto illum melius procerum stipaverit agmen.
- 5 a. Arripiat digitis pugnacibus arma satelles,  
 iniciens dextram capulo clypeumque retentans,  
 inque hostes ruat, et nullos expalleat ictus.
- b. Nemo se retro feriendum præbeat hosti,  
 nemo enses tergo excipiat; pugnacia semper  
 pectora vulneribus pateant. Certamina prima  
 fronte gerunt aquilæ [et rapidis se rictibus urgent  
 anteriore loco; species vos alitis æquet,  
 adverso nullam metuentes corpore plagam.]
- 6 a. Ecce furens æquoque sui fidentior hostis,  
 ferro artus faciemque aurata casside tectus,  
 in medios fertur cuneos,[ceum vincere certus  
 intimidusque fugæ et nullo superabilis ausu.  
 Svetica, me miserum! Danos fiducia spernit.]

\* procul o procul este, profani. Vergil, *Æn.* 6,258; procul hinc, procul impius esto. Ovid, *Fasti* 2,623; cf. Juvenal, *Sat.* 14,45.

Thus the whole stanza is firmly constructed and weighty in content. It is remarkable to note that almost all of its phrases recur in Beowulf, in the first lines of Vígláf's exhortation of the king's men (ll. 2634-2639):

Ic þæt mæl geman  
 þær wé medu þégun,  
 þonne wé gehéton  
 þússum hláforde  
 in bfor-sele,  
 þe ús þás béagas geaf,  
 þæt wé him þá gúð-getáwa  
 gyldan woldon,  
 gif him þyslicu  
 þearf gelumpe,  
 helmas and heard sweord.

4. Only the last two, proverb-like, lines are reasonably certain. Still, it would seem that Saxo's matter here represents a whole, rather than only a half, stanza of the lay.

4 b. Cf. (?) Hrólfssaga, p. 101: *Bǫðvarr bjarki stóð strax upp ok herklæddiz, ok mælti, at nú væri Hrólfir konungi þorð á stoltum drengjum, ok mun þeim öllum duga hjarta ok hugr, sem eigi standi á baki Hrólfis konungs.*

5, 7-8. *öndverðir skulu ernir klóask.* This proverb is rather frequent in Old Norse literature. The first time we know of its having been used it was spoken by the Norwegian chieftain Erling Skialgsson in the year 1028 (see Sighvat's poem in the *Heimskringla*, ii, 406).

6. Hrólfssaga, p. 99: *þetta er ólítill herr með hǫrðum sverðum ok hervápnum, ok þeir ganga í kring um borgina með reiddum sverðum, ok mun Hjǫrvarðr konungr övingjarnligt erindi við þik eiga.*

6, 4. *aurata casside tectus*, cf. *hjálmur gullroðna* (Atlakviða, 4), *gramr enn glaðværi stóð und gullhjalmi* (Hakonarmal, 4.) The golden helmet in Old Norse sagas is the distinguishing feature of royal persons (*Heimskringla*, Olafssaga Tryggvasonar, c. 104, Olafssaga helga, c. 213, etc.)

- b. Ecce truces oculis Gothi visuque feroces  
 cristatis galeis hastisque sonantibus instant;  
 in nostro validam peragentes sanguine cladem.  
*destringunt gladios et acutas cote bipennes.*

7. Quid te, *Hiarthware*,<sup>1</sup> loquar ? quem *Sculda* nocente replevit  
 consilio, tantaque dedit crudescere culpa ?  
 Quid te, infande, canam, nostri discriminis auctor,  
 proditor eximii regis, quem sæva libido  
 imperii tentare nefas furiisque citatum  
 conjugis æternam pepulit prætere noxam ?  
 Quis te error factum Danis dominoque nocentem  
 præcipitavit in hoc fedum<sup>2</sup> scelus ? unde subibat  
 impietas tanto fraudis constructa paratu ?

- 8 a. Quid moror ? *Extremam jam degustavimus escam.*  
 Rex perit et miseram sors ultima corripit urbem.\*  
 b. Illuxit suprema dies, nisi forte quis assit  
 tam mollis, quod<sup>3</sup> se plagis præbere timescat,  
 aut imbellis ita, ut domini non audeat ultor  
 esse sui [dignosque animo proscribat honores.]

<sup>1</sup> *Versus corruptus videtur, Gertz.*    <sup>2</sup> fedum *Gertz*; rerum *P.*

8 sors ultima nostra est. *Lucan, Phars. 7,444* (cfr. 5,692).

<sup>3</sup> qui *Müller*; quod *P. Gertz*.

6, 7-8, *hastis sonantibus*, cf. (*með*) *geiri gjallanda* (Atlakviða, 5, 14, blóðgum brandi ok gjallandi geiri, (Egil Skallagrimsson, Lausavísa, 7), *giellende gár* (Widsið, 128). — *cristatis galeis*, cf. *hjólumum* 'arin' - *greypum* (Atlakviða 3, 16), *hjalmi* 'hring-reiðum' (Hlqðskviða, 2). Both the Old Norse forms of this adjective are corrupt; the right form is, probably, (S. Grundtvig, *Sæmundar Edda*, 2d edition, p. 242), *hjólumum hringgreypum*, "helms fastened with a ring." This word refers, therefore, originally to the helmets used during the period of the Migration of Nations which consisted of iron plates held together by a horizontal ring (cf. Stierna, *Essays on Beowulf*, pp. 3 ff.). It would not be strange if the word had become incomprehensible in later Scandinavian when massive helmets were in use.

The words *hjólumum hringgreypum* and *geirum giöllundum* do not alliterate with one another; in case they occurred in the Biarkamal which Saxo used they must have filled two long-lines.

7. Hrolfssaga, p. 99: *ok þat hygg ek, at lítt aukiz gull í hollinni við skattinn Skuldar systur þinnar, ok hefir hún grimd Skjöldunga*. Neither Saxo nor the saga offer any help for the reconstruction of this stanza; very probably, though, *Skuld* and *Skjöldunga* alliterated. (In my reconstruction I have imitated the phrases of Helgakviða Hund., ii, 51 and 84 (*dis Skiöldunga, ær ertu systir ok ærvita*).

8. Hrolfssaga, p. 100: *en vera kann, at Hrólfr konungr drekki nú hit síðarsta sinn med sínum koppum ok hirðmönnum*. There is probability that both Saxo and the saga refer at this point to a stanza which dealt with Hrolf's and his warriors' last banquet. The saga has Hrolf hold a farewell banquet with his warriors (telling about it in detail, p. 101); but this situation is so bizarre that it certainly owes its origin to some misunderstanding of the original. When Saxo, on the other hand, mentions "the last banquet" he is thinking about the banquet of the preceding night. This thought unquestionably is more natural. As to Hrolf's fall, cf. below, p. 135.



9. Tu quoque consurgens niveum caput exere, Ruta,\*  
et latebris egressa tuis in proelia prodi.  
Cædes te foris acta vocat. Jam curia bellis  
concutitur, diroque strepunt certamine portæ.

10. Loricæ lacerat ferrum, [dirumpitur hamus  
nexilis,] et crebro cedunt præcordia telo.  
Jam clypeum regis vastæ minuere secures;  
jam longi resonant enses, crepitatque bipennis  
humanis impacta humeris et pectora findens.  
Quid pavitant animi ? quid hebescit languidus ensis ?  
Porta vacat nostis, externo plena tumultu.

Cumque Hialto magno admodum strage edita proelium cru-  
entasset, tertio tabernaculum Biarconis offendebat, quem  
metus causa avidum quietis ratus tali ignaviæ exprobra-  
tione pertentat:

9. jam modo cæruleo nitidum caput exere ponto. Ovid, Met. 13,838; ni-  
veum caput. Prudentius, Peristeph. 11,137 (i. e. de Hippolyto martyre).

9, 1. "The snow-white head" is here used by Saxo, contrary to the usage of his Latin prototypes, for light yellow hair, which clearly points to Northern conditions. Cf. also in Norse: *sveinn enn hvíti* (Lokasenna, 20); *þann enn hvíta hadd Svanhildar* (Guðrúnarhvöt, 15); *meyjar hvíthaddaðar* (Fas., ii, 343, verses); likewise frequently in Icelandic prose: *hvítr á hár*; as an epithet: *hvíthofuð*, *hvítkollr*, *hvítr*; likewise in Danish: *hvid*. Hence Ruta's "white head" of Saxo must have stood in the lay, and all the more since in another place he designates light yellow hair with *flava caesaries* (p. 371). *Ruta* = Icelandic *Hrut*, cf. below, p. 144.

9, 3-4. Saxo seems to have understood his text to mean that *Hrut* is to leave her bower in order to participate in the battle (*in praelia prodi*); but it seems more natural to assume that she is to save her life, now that the battle approaches her bower. (There is nothing in the poem which justifies us to assume that she is a *skjaldmær* (shield-maiden, amazon) and still less that she is a *valkyria*).

10. Cf. (?) *Hrolfssaga*, p. 102: *Hjalti hinn hugprúði mælti: mǫrg brynja er nú slitin ok mǫrg vápn brotin ok margr hraustr riddari af baki stunginn, ok hefir konungr várr gott skap, því (at) nú er hann svá glaður sem þá er hann drakk ǫl fastast, ok vegr jafnt með báðom höndum, ok er hann mjök ólíkr ǫðrum konungum í bardagum, því (at) svá líz mer sem hann hafi tólf karla afl, ok margan mann hefir hann drepit, ok nú má Hjorvarður konungr sjá þat, at sverðit skofnunar bítr, ok gnestr hann nú hátt í þeirra hausum*. This is, perhaps, a free rendering of the stanza. The praise of Hrolf has the appearance of being the work of the saga man; *tólf manna afl* is scarcely original in the *Biarkamal* since it reminds too much of *tólf manna fjör* in stanza 28; *glaður sem þá er hann drakk ǫl fastast*, cf. stanza 16.

Also in the *Skiöldungasaga* we find the fight in the castle gate — probably following some poetic source, since this has nothing to do with the action: *ille (Rolpho) tamen cum suis heroica virtute arma capescit, hostem mactat, portis expellit, sed lethargo nescio quo correptus, rursus admittit* (Arngrim, c. 12).

Several of the details, however, remind one of Eyvind skaldaspillir's *Hakonarmal*, verses 5-7; *jam longi resonant enses (glumruðu glymhringar)*, *crepitatque bipennis humanis impacta humeris et pectora findens (lutu langbarðar at lýða fjörvi)* *loricas lacerat*

- 11 a.** *Ut quid abes, Biarco? num te sopor occupat altus ?  
Quid tibi, quæso, moræ est ? Aut exi aut igne premeris.  
Elige quod præstat! Eia! concurrite mecum!*
- b.** *Ignem ursos arcere licet; penetralia flammis  
spargamus, primosque petant incendia postes,  
excipiat torrem thalamus, tectique ruina  
formentum flammis et alendo præbeat igni.  
Fundere damnatis fas est incendia portis.*
- 12 a.** *At nos, qui regem voto meliore veremur,  
jungamus cuneos stabiles, tutisque phalangem  
ordinibus mensi, qua rex præcepit, eamus,  
qui natum Bøki Røricum stravit avari  
[implicuitque virum leto virtute carentem.]*
- b.** *Ille quidem præstans opibus habituque fruendi  
pauper erat, [probitate minus quam fenore pollens;  
aurum militia potius ratus omnia lucro  
posthabuit, laudisque carens] congegit acervos  
æris et ingenuis uti contempsit amicis.*
- 13 a.** *Cumque laccessitus Rolvonis classe fuisset,  
egestum cistis aurum deferre ministros  
jussit et in primas urbis diffundere portas,  
[dona magis quam bella parans, quia militis expers  
munere, non armis, tentandum credidit hostem,  
tamquam opibus solis bellum gesturus, et usu  
rerum, non hominum, Martem producere posset.]*
- b.** *Ergo graves loculos et ditia claustra resolvit,  
armillas teretes et onustas protulit arcas,  
exitii formenta sui, ditissimus æris,*

ferrum (*beit þá sverð . . . váðir Váfaðar*); jam clypeum. . . . (Cf. *skildir brotnuðu*.)

The contents of this stanza must be thought to cover the action while Hialti is addressing Hrut, and partly before it; but on account of its dramatic form it can be told only after Hialti has addressed himself to her. For this reason stanza 11 (with the summons to Biarki) does not connect with the account of stanza 10, but with Hialti's exhortations in stanza 9.

11. *Hrolfssaga*, p. 103: *Hjalti mælti: hversu lengi skulu vé bíða hins frægasta kappi, ok er þetta mikil ódæmi, at þú stendr ekki á þína rettu fætr ok reynir nú þína styrku armleggi, sem svá eru sterkir sem alibirnir. Upp nú Bǫðvarr bjarki ok minn yfirmaðr, ella mun ek brenna húsit ok sjálfan þik: ok er þetta höfuðskomm, þvílíkr kappi sem þú ert, at konungrinn skull leggja sik í háska fyrir oss ok tynir þú svá þínu miklu lofi, sem þú hefir um stund haft.* It is noteworthy that both Saxo and the saga mention bears at this place, though in a different connection. Possibly, the text of the lay offered some difficulty at this spot.

12, 3-4. *qui natum Bǫki Røricum stravít asari:* is probably a misunderstanding by Saxo of *Hræreks bani hneggvanbauga*; see p. 73.

13, 7-8. Cf. *opt sparir leiðum þats hefir ljúfum hugat* (*Havamal*; for variants of the same proverb see Detter and Heinzl, *Sæmundar Edda*, ii, p. 97); Danish proverb: *æ forgaar thath man syn wini sinom*; *offthe forgaar thet man siin wen necter*. "Often perishes what one denies his friend." (Peder Laale, no. 247).

## 114 THE HEROIC LEGENDS OF DENMARK

bellatoris inops, hostique adimenda relinquens  
pignora, quæ patriis præbere pepercit amicis.  
[Annellos ultro metuens dare, maxima nolens  
pondera fu(d)it <sup>1</sup> opum, veteris populator acervi.]

- 14 a. Rex tamen hunc prudens oblataque munera spreuit,  
rem pariter vitamque adimens; nec profuit hosti  
census iners, quem longo avidus cumulaverat ævo.  
Hunc pius invasit Rolvo, summasque perempti  
cepit opes, inter dignos partitus amicos,  
[quicquid avara manus tantis congesserat annis;  
irrupensque opulenta magis quam fortia castra,  
præbuit eximiam sociis sine sanguine prædam.]
- b. Cui nil tam pulchrum fuit, ut <sup>2</sup> non funderet illud,  
[aut carum, quod non sociis daret, æra favillis  
assimilans,<sup>3</sup> famaue annos, non fenore mensus.]
15. Unde liquet, regem claro jam funere functum  
præclaros egisse dies, speciosaque fati  
tempora præteritos decorasse viriliter annos.  
Nam virtute ardens, dum viveret, omnia vicit,  
egregio dignas sortitus corpore vires.  
Tam præceps in bella fuit, quam concitus amnis \*  
in mare decurrit, pugnamque capessere promptus,  
ut cervus rapidum bifido pede tendere cursum.

16. Ecce per infusas humana tabe lacunas  
cæsorū excussi dentes, rapienti cruoris  
profluvio loti, scabris limantur arenis.

<sup>1</sup> fudit *Barth St. Müll.*; fugit *P.* <sup>2</sup> ut *Steph.*; aut *P.* <sup>3</sup> assimilans *Steph.*; assimilans *P.*

15. ceu concitus imbribus amnis. Ovid, *Met.* 3,79.

15. Saxo's expressions here do not bear the stamp of antiquity. The comparison between the hero's dash and a rushing torrent is, possibly, borrowed from Ovid who likens the serpent attacking Kadmos to "a swollen torrent." (The only Scandinavian passage known to me which could remind one of this is in a Faroese magic formula: *só komi hjálp og redning til tín sem flóð af sjó, sem fossur af á* (*Annaler for nordisk oldkyndighed*, 1846, p. 350).

Comparison with a stag occurs also in the Edda, in the passages devoted to the praise of the departed heroes Sigurð Fafnisbani and Helgi Hundingsbani (*Guðr.*, ii, 2; *Helgakv. Hund.* ii, 38); but there to be sure the comparison concerns the size and slenderness of the stag, not his swiftness. Saxo's encomium plainly is of a kind with these lays; and it is very possible that the original wording of the *Biarkamal* resembled them still more closely than does Saxo's Latin text. The fragment of the *Biarkamal* in the *Heimskingla*: *hniginn's í hadd jarðar Hrólfr enn stórláti*, shows no close similarity to Saxo and scarcely ever was a part of a passage in praise of the hero.

16 a. Saxo's long description of the flowing blood scarcely filled more than two lines of the original poem. The thought is poorly adapted to elaboration by means of a kenning (cf. *fell flóð fleina*, "the stream of the arrows flowed," *Hakonarmal*, 7; *þvær unda flóði*, "the Valkyria washed the hero's head (in his dream) in the "stream of the wounds," *Gísli Súrsson*, stanza 18, *Jónsson*, *Skjalde-*

Splendescunt limo<sup>1</sup> allisi, lacerataque torrens  
 sanguinis ossa vehit truncosque superfluit artus.  
 Danicus undescit<sup>2</sup> sanguis, stagnatque cruenta  
 latius eluvies, et corpora sparsa revolvit  
 elisus venis vapidum<sup>3</sup> spumantibus amnis.  
 Impiger invehitur Danis Hi(arthv)arus,<sup>4</sup> amator  
 Martis, et extenta pugnantes provocat hasta.  
 Attamen hic inter discrimina fataque belli

17 a. Frothonis video lætum arridere nepotem  
 qui (Fu)r(i)vallinos<sup>5</sup> auro conseverat agros.

b. Nos quoque lætitiæ species extollat honesta,  
 morte secuturos generosi fata parentis.  
 [Voce ergo simus alacres ausuque vigentes.  
 Namque metum par est animosis spernere dictis

<sup>1</sup> loti (?) *Gertz*; toto et *P*.

<sup>2</sup> undescit *Gertz*; humescit *P*.

<sup>3</sup> vapidum *Steph.*; validum *P*.

<sup>4</sup> Hiarthvarus *Steph.*; Hyarus *P*.

<sup>5</sup> Furivallinos *Müller (Olrik)*; Sirtvallinos *P*.

*digtning*). The purpose of this stanza (or half-stanza) is to fasten the attention again on the battle that is being fought about Leire. Probably, the mention of the stream of blood filled one long-line, and that of Hiarvarth another.

16 *b*. The second half stanza offers difficulties, no definite support for it being found in Saxo. Still, some connection between Hiarvarð in stanza 16 and "the kinsman of Froði" (Hrolf) seems to be necessary; cf. below, sub. 17. In my restoration I have seen fit to add to this stanza the "smiling" of Hrolf (which seems to exceed the requisite number of lines in stanza 17). The last two lines were supplied from Hrolfssaga, p. 102: *því [at] nú er hann svá glaðr sem þá er hann drakk öl fastast* (cf. above on stanza 10), although I do not believe that this passage embodies any reminiscence from the Biarkamal. In fact, the saga offers no parallel to the middle part of Saxo's poem (Hrolf's praise).

17 *a*. The real words of the Biarkamal are here easily to be discerned in the Latin of Saxo, (1) by the alliteration: nephew of *Fróði*—*Fyre* Plains; (2) by the mentioning of the Fyre Plains, i.e., the famous *Fýrisvellir* (plains along the river Fyri, i.e., the environs of Upsala), mentioned frequently in Old Norse literature as the place where Hrolf strewed his gold and where the great battle was fought (about 980); mentioned by Saxo only here; (3) by the allusion to the mythical king Frothi of the Frothi Peace (elsewhere unknown to Saxo) and his grinding the gold on his magic mill, Grotti; and as such the ideal archetype for Hrolf sowing the "golden seed" on the Fyre Plains—an allusion altogether according to the spirit of ancient Northern poetry. Cf. also pp. 136, 449.

17 *b*. The conception that the warriors shall exhibit the same cheerfulness in the face of death as their lord does, seems to bear the stamp of antiquity; it must form the complement (i.e. second half-stanza) to "Frothi's nephew, etc."; moreover Saxo's repetitions show that the thought was suggested by his source.



## 118 THE HEROIC LEGENDS OF DENMARK

et memorabilibus letum consciscere \* factis.

Deserat os animumque timor; fateamur utroque  
intrepidus nisus, nec <sup>1</sup> nos nota judicet ulla  
parte aliqua signum dubii præstare timoris.]

18 a. Librentur stricto meritorum pondera ferro.

Gloria defunctos sequitur, putrique favillæ  
fama superstes erit,\* nec in ullum decidet ævum,  
quod perfecta suo patravit tempore virtus.

b. Quid clausis agitur foribus? quid pessula valvas  
juncta seris cohibent? etenim jam tertia te vox,  
Biarco, ciet, clausoque jubet procedere tecto.

### Contra quæ BIARCO

19 a. Quid me Rolvonis generum, quid bellice Hialto,  
tanta voce cies? Etenim qui magna profatur,  
grandiloquisque alios verbis invitat ad arma,  
audere et dicta factis æquare tenetur,

b. ut vocem fateatur opus. Sed sesine, donec  
armer et horrendo belli præcingar amictu.  
Jamque ensem lateri jungo, jam corpore primum  
lorica galeaque tegor, dum tempora cassis  
excipit et rigido conduntur pectora ferro.  
Nemo magis clausis refugit penetralibus uri

20. cumque sua rogos esse domo. Licet insula memet  
ediderit, [strictæque habeam natalia terræ,  
*bissenas regi debebo rependere gentes,*  
quas titulis dedit ille meis. Attendite fortes!

\* consciscere *Steph.*; conciscere *P.*

<sup>1</sup> nec *Gertz*; ne *P.*

18. hoc solum solamen inest, quod gloria mortem nescit, et occasum non  
sentit fama superstes. Galterus, *Alexandreis VII.*

18, 1-2. "Let our drawn sword measure the weight of our service" (Elton's translation); *Wägt mit gezücktem stahle der rühmlichen thaten gewicht ab* (Herrmann); *Mit gezücktem schwerte werde der wert unserer verdienste abgewogen* (Jantzen); *Maale nu vil vi vort mod med de hug som med fjenden vi skifter* (Jörgen Olrik). However, Saxo's words may also signify: "our king's deserts shall be weighed (i.e., repaid) with our drawn swords."

18, 3-4. Cf. Havamal, 76: en orðstír deyr aldregi hveim's sér góðan getr. Saxo's repetitions of this thought tend to show that it occurred in his original.

18, 5-8. The contents of the first half-stanza are, clearly, (1) Hjal-ti's astonishment at finding Biarki's door still bolted, (2) his calling him for the third time (alliteration: *pik* — *priðja sinn*?).

19. Cf. Hrolfsaga, p. 103: *Bogðvarr stóð þá upp ok blés við ok mælti: ekki þarftu, Hjalti, at hræða (better: hæða) mik, því [at] ekki em ek enn hræddr, ok nú em ek allbúinn at fara.* (To be sure this corresponds more closely with stanza 30 a.)

19, 1-2. Alliteration: *Hjalti* — *Hrólf's mágr*.

20 a. Hrolfssaga, p. 104: *á ek honum ok mart at launa, fyrst mægð ok tólf bú, er hann gaf mér, þar með marga dyrgripi.* Thus also in the Biarkarimur, song VIII, stanza 12: *stillir gaf honum stór bú tólf ok stolta dóttur sína.* As to the general resemblance of this passage to Beowulf, ll. 2992 ff., cf. above, p. 77, note.

20, 1. The birth of Biarki on a little island (*holmr*) is not touched upon in the saga; perhaps, because the compiler knew of another and fuller story of his origin and kinship, which traces him to the enchanted king's son in some part of the Norwegian mountains.

21. Nemo lorica se vestiat interituri  
 corporis; extremum perstringat nexile ferrum;  
*in tergum redeant clipei, pugnemus apertis*  
*pectoribus*; totosque auro densate lacertos:  
 armillas dextræ excipiant, quo fortius ictus  
 colibrare queant et amarum figere vulnus.  
 [Nemo pedem referat! Certatim quisque subire  
 hostiles studeat gladios hastasque minaces,  
 ut carum ulciscamur herum. Super omnia felix,  
 qui tanto sceleri vindictam impendere <sup>1</sup> possit  
 et fraudum <sup>2</sup> justo punire piacula ferro.]

<sup>1</sup> *sic P*; imponere *Gertz*.

<sup>2</sup> *fraudum Steph.*; *fraudem P*.

20, 3. *tólf bú*; thus the *Hrolfssaga* and the *Biarkarimur*. This must be the Norse equivalent for the "*bissenas gentes*" of Saxo (12 villages?). The number of farms (*bú*) is in northern antiquity and during the middle ages the expression for the wealth of a man; cf. áttak at fullu fimm bú saman, *Híalmarskviða*; réð einn at þat átján búum, *Rígsþula* 38; meðt XV bygget boe, mett mine femtenn boe etc. (*Danmarks gamle Folkeviser*, 68, C 39, 75 end; 205 B 7; *Isl. fornkvæði* 53 A 33, B 19, etc.).

20 b. This half-stanza is supplied from the saga. Its existence in the Danish *Biarkamal* is not certain; still, an allusion to Biarki's relation to Hrolf seems to be in its right place here.

*Hrolfssaga*, p. 104, has here some lines which perhaps are a free paraphrase of the ending of stanza 19 or of the beginning of stanza 20; or, possibly, of a stanza of the *Biarkamal* not to be found in Saxo: þá (er) ek var ungr, flyða ek hvárki eld né járn, en eld hefi ek sjaldan reynt, en járngang hefi ek stundum þólat ok fyrir hvárigu gengitingat til ok skaltu at sonnu segja, at ek vil fullvel berjaz. (Cf. p. 135, note.)

21, 5-6 (?) cf. *Hrolfssaga*, p. 106; *en eigi skal nú við hlífaz, ef vér skulum í Valholl í kveld*.

21, 1-4. The first half-stanza is tentative (cf. below, p. 131, note).

21, 7-8. The ending of this stanza shows the terseness of the proverb so frequently seen in lines 7-8 of the *Biarkamal*. The thought is so original, not to say unexpected, that it is not likely to be Saxo's own. Rather, it seems to be a continuation in thought of that on which the Viking Period laid weight, to possess "heavy and deep-cutting swords" (as they are called in an Irish chronicle): in a moment of strong emotion the arms were also imagined as heavy with gold rings in order to increase the weight of the blow. Against this may be urged, however, (1) a weight on the arms would hinder, rather than aid, a blow; (2) there scarcely was opportunity at this moment to draw gold rings on one's arms; (3) Saxo's Latin text lends no support to the above view, *auro densate lacertos* meaning the arms being made "denser," i.e., better shielded by the help of the gold rings. Very likely then, the poet of the lay thought of the practice of moving the rings one was wearing to a point where they would sit more firmly and produce the feeling of one's being armor

**22 a.** Ecce mihi videor cervum penetrasse ferocem  
Theutonico certe,<sup>1</sup> qui Snyrtir dicitur, ense,

**b.** a quo belligeri cepi cognomen, ut Agner  
Ingelli natum fudi retulique tropæum.

<sup>1</sup> *forlasse; certans Gertz.*

plated. It seems as if this idea is connected with a custom followed by Lapland hunters: after killing a bear they place a piece of brass on their cap, "or else they thread a ring of some size on a thong; whereupon (they slip it on, or bind it to their right arm, between hand and elbow, so as to render them strong and courageous to attack a bear again and to have the effect that the animal will not be able to injure them." Reuterskiöld, *Källskrifter till Lapparnas mytologi* (Stockholm, 1910; p. 22).

22 a. Hrolfssaga, p. 107: *Ek mætta Higrvarði konungi áðan á hríðinni, svá (at) okkarr fund bar saman, ok kastaði hvárgi okkarr lqstum á aðra.* (Then there follows a paraphrase of stanza 23.)

22 b. Hrolfssaga, p. 104: *ek drap Agnar berserk ok eigi síðr konung, ok er þat verk haft í minnum.*

22, 3-4. *Snyrtir* is here the name of Biarki's sword (in all other sources it is *Laufi*, i.e., the sword blade as thin as a leaf), alliterating with *sax* or *saxsverð* (i.e., short sword, cf. note to stanza 3). *Snyrtir* is used in some later Scaldic products (the Hattalykill of earl Rognvald, the þulur in the Edda) as a poetic term for "sword." However, it is not exactly the same word, phonetically, as Saxo's *Snyrtir*; for Saxo's *y* has not the value of Old Norse *y* (which he expresses by *u*), but of *i* (especially *i*). The form of the word in the Biarkamal must, then, be *snirtir* (or *snirtir*, with later lengthening of *i* before *rt*), derived from Old Norse, *snerta* "to attack," (hence *snirtir* "the sword which attacks, strikes, penetrates"). The Icelandic spelling *snyrtir* (from *snyrta* "to decorate, to make smooth") is only a folk-etymological alternative. From Rognvald's expression we must conclude that the word did not belong to the general poetic stock, for he adds the commentary: *sverð kalla ek svá* "thus I call a sword"; very probably, he found the word in the only place among older monuments where it is to be found, the Biarkamal.

22, 2. *Cervus procar* ("the wild hart") seems an epithet befitting any prominent warrior; both as a name or a poetic expression it fully agrees with the ancient northern style. Possibly, it is a kenning for warrior, like *beorn* in A. S. Still, it is not altogether certain whether the word is derived from *hjártr*, "deer," or not rather from *hjarta* "heart," in analogy to A. S. *stearcheort* and Old Norse (late) *hjartaprúðr* "proud of heart." We may say with certainty

- 23 a.** Ille meo capiti impactum perfregit Hø(c)hingum,<sup>1</sup>  
 elisum morsu gladium, majora daturus  
 vulnera, si melius ferri viguisset acumen.
- b. Cui contra lævam lateris cum parte sinistri  
 dissecui dextrumque pedem, labensque sub artus  
 incidit in medias ferrum penetrabile costas.*

- 24.** *Hercule nemo illo visus mihi fortior unquam.*  
 Semivigil subsedit enim cubitoque reclinis  
 ridendo excepit letum [mortemque cachinno  
 spreuit] et Elysium gaudens successit in orbem.  
 [Magna viri virtus, quæ risu calluit uno  
 supremam celare necem summumque dolorem  
 corporis ac mentis læto compescere vultu!]

<sup>1</sup> Høchingum *Bugge*; Høthingum *P.*

only that it was not Saxo himself who invented this doubtful expression.

The *Hjorvarðr* of the *Hrolfssaga* must be ascribed to an arbitrary alteration on the part of the compiler.

22, 5. "I received the name of warrior (*belligeri cognomen*) when I slew Agnar Ingjaldsson." No such surname of Biarki is found elsewhere in Danish tradition. In the Icelandic tradition he is called *Boðvarr bjarki*, where *Boðvarr* is his real name and *bjarki* the epithet. Possibly, it is here meant for *boðvar-Biarki* ('war-Biarki'); cf. p. 255. *Belliger* also in stanza 33: *belliger divus* 'the war-god' (Othin).

23. *Hrolfssaga*, p. 107: *ek mætta Hjorvarði konungi áðan í fyrri hríðinni, svá (at) okkar fund bar saman, ok kastaði hvárgi okkar lōstum á aðra, áttu vit vápna viðskipti um stund; sendi hann mér lag, hvar ek kenda heljarfōr, en ek hjó af honum hōnd ok fōt, ok kom annat hōggit á qxl honum, ok klauf ek svá ofan með síðunni ok með hryggnum.* Cf. *Víkarsbōlkr* stanza 15 and 17: *Mik lét sverði sáru hōggvinn skarpeggjuðu skjōld í gegnum, hjálm af hōfði, en haus skorat, ok kinnkjalka klofinn í jaxla; sneiddak honum síðu áðra bitrum brandi um búk þveran; svá af heiptum hjorvi beittak, at alls megin áðr kostaðak, Gautrekssaga*, ed. Ranisch, p. 20–21, *Fas.*, iii, 23–25 (this duel between Starkað and the viking king Sisar was probably modelled after the scene in the *Biarkamal*. Cf. *Danmarks Heltedigtning*, ii, 319, 121 ff.)

23, 2. *Høthingum* (in Saxo, ed. Paris.) is the mistake of a copyist for *Høchingum*; Old Norse *hækingr*, kenning for "sword" (*Landnāma*, 166; þulur of the *Sn. Edda*, i, 586; see Bugge in *PBBeiträge*, xii, 69). On the meaning of this name cf. below.

24. *Hrolfssaga*, p. 107 (of Hjarvarth!): *en svá brá hann sér við, at hann andvarpaði eigi, ok svá sem hann sofnaði um stund, en ek hugða hann dauðan, ok fáir munu slíkar finnaz, ok eigi barðiz hann síðar ódjarfligar en áðr, ok aldrei kann ek segja hvat hann effir.*

24, 8. *Elysium gaudens successit in orbem*; possibly, the alliteration is: *gekk hann glaðliga til Glaðsheims vanga*. (It is to be noted, however, that Saxo's expressions for the other world are rarely of any precise nature.)



- 25 a.** Nunc quoque cujusdam præclaro stemmate nati  
vitales fibras ferro rimabar eodem,  
et ferrum penitus intra præcordia mersi.  
Filius hic regis et avito sanguine lucens  
indole clarus erat tenerisque nitentior annis.
- b.** Non illi hamatum poterat prodesse metallum,  
non ensis, non umbo teres; tam vivida ferri  
vis erat, objectis tardari nescia rebus.
- 26.** Ergo duces ubi sunt Gothorum militiæque  
Hiarthvari? Veniant et vires sanguine pensent!  
Qui jaciunt, qui tela rotant, nisi regibus orti?  
[Surgit ab ingenuis bellum; clarissima Martem  
stemmata conficiunt; nec enim vulgaribus ausis  
res agitur, quam sola ducum discrimina tentant.]
- 27 a.** Illustres obeunt proceres. [En, maxime Rolvo,  
magnates cecidere tui, pia stemmata cessant.]  
Non humile obscurumve genus, non funera plebis  
Pluto rapit vilesque animas, sed fata potentum  
implicat et claris complet Phlegethonta figuris.
- b.** Non memini certamen agi, quo promptius esset  
alternare enses [partirique ictibus ictus.]  
Dans unum tres accipio; [sic mutua Gothi  
vulnera compensant, sic dextra potentior hostis  
vindicat acceptam cumulado fenore poenam.]
- 28 a.** Quamquam adeo solus multorum funere <sup>1</sup> leto  
corpora tradiderim pugnans, ut imagine collis  
editus e truncis excresceret artubus <sup>2</sup> agger,  
et speciem tumuli congesta cadavera ferrent.
- b.** *At* <sup>3</sup> quid agit, qui me nuper prodire jubebat,  
eximia se laude probans, aliosque *superba*  
*voce terens et amara serens opprobria*, tamquam  
uno bisseñas complexus corpore vitas?

<sup>1</sup> fortia Gertz.<sup>2</sup> artubus Steph.; arcubus P.<sup>3</sup> At Gertz; Et P.

25. Cf. Hrolfssaga, p. 104 (after Agnar's fall): *telr nú upp fyrir honum mǫrg stórvirki, er hann hafði unnit ok banamaðr orðit margra manna.*

26. Hrolfssaga, p. 107: *Hér er nú mart manna saman komit á móti oss ríkra ok tiginna, er úr ǫllum áttum at drífr, svá (at) eigi má rǫnd við reisa.*

27 a. Cf. Hrolfssaga, p. 106: ok svá margr leggr sem hér er klofinn ok skjǫldr rifinn, hjalmr ok brynja í smátt sundr hǫgvinn ok margr hofðingi í sundr bolaðr, þá eru þeir nú grimmastir hinir dauðu viðreignar, ok ekki hǫfum vit mátt við þessu.

27 b. Cf. Hrolfssaga, p. 106 (as the words of Hialti, stanza 29): *ok þykkiz ek þó allákast vega, ok get ek nú eigi hefnt allra minna hoggva.*

28 a. Cf. Hrolfssaga, p. 105: Bǫðvarr bjarki ruddiz nú um fast ok hjó a tvær hendr ok hugsaði nú ekki annat en vinna sem mest, áðr hann felli, ok fellr nú hverr um þveran annan fyrir honum, ok blóðugar hefir hann báðar sínar oxlir ok *hlóð valkǫstu á alla vegu í kring um sik*; lét hann líkt sem hann væri óðr, — *Hlaða valkǫstum* (= *ut speciem tumuli congesta cadavera ferent*) is a common expression in Old Norse prose and verse. (That the hill of corpses is intended to mean a wall of defence (*agger*) does not lie in Saxo's words.)

28 b. Hrolfssaga, p. 106: *eða hvar er sá kappi Hrólfs konungs, sem mér frýði mest hugar, ok mik kvaddi optast útgöngu, áðr en ek svaraði honum ? ok eigi sé ek hann nú, ok em þó eigi vanr at hallmæla mönnum.*

28, 8. *bissenas vitas* = *tólf manna fjór* (Hervararkviða).

Ad hæc HIALTO

29 a. *Quamquam subsidio tenui fruerē,<sup>1</sup> haud procul absum;  
hac quoque, qua stamus, opus est ope, nec magis usquam  
vis aut lecta manus promptorum in bella virorum  
exigitur. Jam duræ acies et spicula scutum  
frustatim secuere meum [partesque minutim  
avulsas absumpsit edax per proelia ferrum.]*

b. [Prima sibi testis res est, seque ipsa fatetur;  
fama oculo cedit, [visusque fidelior aure est.  
Rupti etenim clipei retinacula sola supersunt,  
sectus et in gyro remanet mihi pervicus<sup>2</sup> umbo.]  
At<sup>3</sup> nunc Biarco, viges, quamquam cunctantior<sup>4</sup>  
extiteris, damnumque moræ probitate repensas<sup>5</sup> aequo  
?

At BIARCO

30. *Carpere me necdum probrisque lacescere cessas?  
Multa moras afferre solent. Jamque<sup>5</sup> obvius ensis  
cunctandi mihi causa fuit, quem Sueticus hostis  
in mea prævalido contorsit pectora nisu.  
[Nec parce gladium capuli moderator adegit;  
nam quantum in nudo vel inermi corpore fas est,  
egit in armato;] sic duri tegmina ferri  
ut molles trajecit aquas; [nec opis mihi quicquam  
aspera loricæ poterat committere moles.]*

<sup>1</sup> fruerē Gertz; fruor P.<sup>2</sup> pervicus Gertz; pervius Müller; pervidus P.<sup>3</sup> At Gertz; Et P. <sup>4</sup> cunctantior Gertz; cunctatior P.<sup>5</sup> Jamque Gertz; Namque P.

29. Hrolfssaga, p. 106: *þá sagði Hjalti: þú segir satt, eigi ertu hallmælasamr; hér stendr sá sem Hjalti heitir, ok hefi ek nú nokkut verkæfni fyrir höndum, ok er eigi alllangt í millum okkar ok þarf ek við góðra drengja, því (at) af mér eru höggvar allar hlífar, fóstbróðir.*

29, 6. *sjón er sögu ríkari*, a common proverb in Old Norse, is used for the first time in a Skaldic poem of the year 1028, the Togdrápa of Thórarinn loftunga: *várum sjón sögu slíks ríkari* (*Heimskringla*, ed. Jónsson, ii, 398). Also in Old Danish: *syyn er saghu rikare* (*syn er sawæ rigesth*), in the proverbs of Peder Laale, 140, Swedish no. 121 (cf. A. Kock, *Ostenordiska medeltidsordspråk*, ii, 75). A later Danish form of the same proverb is *Siun gaar for sagn* (for the first time in the MS. collection of Hans Thomissön, †1573, and in the Saxo translation of Anders Wedel, 1575; see Mau, *Dansk Ordsprogsskat*, ii, 1879, p. 391).

29 b. The teasing words at the conclusion of the stanza doubtless belong to the original, for the following stanza (according to the testimony of both sources) begins with an answer to it. Hence it is possible that the second half-stanza was more condensed; perhaps like this:

Sight goes before hearsay:  
sundered is my shield;  
doest thou battle now, Biarki,  
as thou bidedst before?

30 a. Cf. Hrolfssaga, p. 103: *ekki þarftu, Hjalti, at hœða (hræða Codices), mik, því (at) ekki er ek enn hræddr* (see stanza 19).

30 b. Cf. Hrolfssaga, p. 106: *en nú er svá lagt til míns hjarta, at mér er ekki jafnglatt at vega sem áðr.*

Not far above, the saga has a passage which looks very much like a paraphrase from an unknown stanza of the lay: *Bǫðvarr mælli: nem hvað ek segi. Ek hefi bariz í tólf folk- (flokk-, Codices) orrostum ok jafnan verit kallaðr fullhugi ok hliðat fyrir engum berserk; ek hvatta Hrólfr konung at sækja heim Aðils konung, ok mættum vér þar nokkurum brogðum ok var þat lítils vert hjá þessum ófagnaði* (This stanza evidently belongs to Biarki's and Hjalti's conversation, presumably with the catalogue of Biarki's deeds, stanza 20.)

31. *At*<sup>1</sup> *nunc, ille ubi sit, qui vulgo dicitur Othin*  
*armipotens\**, uno semper contentus ocello\*\*,  
*dic mihi, Ruta, precor, usquam si conspicias illum.*

Ad hæc RUTA

32. *Adde oculum propius et nostras perspice*<sup>2</sup> *chelas,*  
*ante sacraturus victrici lumina signo\**,  
*si vis præsentem tuto cognoscere Martem.*

Tum BIARCO

33. *Si potero horrendum Friggæ spectare maritum,*  
*quantumcunque albo clypeo sit tectus et altum*  
*flectat equum, Lethra nequaquam sospes abibit;*  
*fas est belligerum bello prosternere divum.*

<sup>1</sup> *At Gertz; Et P.*

\*\* *oculo contenta sit uno. Juvenal, Sat. VI.*

<sup>2</sup> *perspice Gertz; prospice P.*

31. *Mars armipotens. Vergil, Æn. 9,717; divæ armipotentis. 2,425.*

32. *victricia signa. Lucan, Pharsalia 1,347 (about flags!); victrici (abl.) ib. 1,3. Justin 5, 4, 6.*

—30, 7. In the original probably: *svá skar vígváðir sem í vatn of brygði*; cf. *Hákonarmál*, stanza 5:

*svá beit þá sverð  
ór sikling's hendi  
váðir Váfaðar  
sem í vatn of brygði*

Cf. *Fas.*, iii, 244; *beit sverðit sem í vatn brygði*; *Fas.*, iii, 132; *beit þetta sverð svá þeirra búka sem í vatn brygði*.

31. Cf. *Hrolfssaga*, p. 107: *en Óðin kann ek ekki at kenna hér enn; mer er þó mesti grunr á, at hann muni sveima í móti oss, herjans sonurinn hinn fúli ok hinn ótrúi*. (It is not entirely clear whether the saga writer knew the same text of these lines as Saxo, or conjectured their contents from stanza 33.)

32. Cf. below, Othin in the *Biarkamal*.

33. Cf. *Hrolfssaga*, p. 107: *ok ef nokkurr kynni mér til hans at segja, skylda ek kreista hann sem annan versta ok minsta mýsling*, which is like a half-stanza of the Icelandic recension of the *Biarkamal* (preserved in Snorri's *Edda*):

*svá skalk hann kyrkja  
sem enn kámleita  
veli viðbjarnar  
veggja aldinna.*

But this version has not the slightest similarity to Saxo's rendering of this half-stanza. Saxo's text is in itself quite vigorous and characteristic ("he would not escape from Leire alive"). The Danish half-stanza about Leire and the Icelandic one about crushing Othin like a mouse, must, then, be independent variants. — Cf. *Halfskviða*, stanza 29:

*eigum Óðni  
illt at gjalda  
er hann slíkan konung  
sigri rænti.*

(a paraphrase of the *Biarkamal*.)

34. [(At nunc, bellice Hialto, extremis viribus usos) <sup>1</sup>  
ante oculos regis clades speciosa cadentes  
excipiat. Dum vita manet, studeamus honeste  
posse mori clarumque manu decerpere funus.]  
Ad caput extincti moriar ducis obrutus, at<sup>2</sup> tu  
ejusdem pedibus moriendo allabere pronus,  
ut videat, quisquis congesta cadavera lustrat,  
qualiter acceptum domino pensarimus<sup>3</sup> aurum.
35. Præda erimus corvis aquilisque rapacibus esca,  
vesceturque vorax nostri dape corporis ales.  
Sic belli intrepidus proceres occumbere par est,  
illustrem socio complexos funere regem.

<sup>1</sup> *Hunc versum, qui abest a P., supplevit Gertz.*

<sup>2</sup> *at Gertz; ac P.*

<sup>3</sup> *pensarimus Gertz; pensavimus P.*

33, 2. *Friggæ maritum*, cf. *Friggjar faðmbyggvir* (in a Skaldic poem, the *Hrafnsmál*, by Thorbiörn hornklofi, about 900).

33, 3. "Though he be covered by his white shield" (Saxo). In Old Norse heroic poetry the chieftain carries a white shield: *minn veit ek skjöld hvítastan* (Gunnar in *Atlakviða*, stanza 4 f. Jormunrekk in *Hamðismál*, stanza 20; in *blikhvíta rǫnd*, Angantyr in the *Hlǫðskviða* and the prose of the *Hervararsaga*. The conception of Othin carrying a shield is unknown in Old Norse tradition and in the sculptural remains of the Viking Age; but on the Vendel bronze plates (from Upland in Sweden, about 600) he is figured as riding with a great round shield.

33, 4. "and governs his high horse" (Saxo). Othin's horse is depicted as supernaturally high in the Gotlandic sculptured stones of the Viking Age, and sometimes described in similar fashion in the more modern legends of the nightly Wild Huntsman. (It is thus not necessary to read *album equum* (N. M. Petersen, *Nordisk mytologi*, 1849, p. 171) for *altum equum* of Saxo. In the former case we may compare the white horse of St. Olaf seen by the Værings in battle; also the "Oden," "Un," "Schimmelreiter" of the modern popular tradition who not unfrequently rides a white horse.

34. Cf. *Halfskviða*, end:

Hrókr er fallinn  
með hertoga  
frœkn at fótum  
folks oddvita . . .  
her man Innsteinn  
til jarðar hníga  
horskr at hofði  
hers oddvita.

The same motif is found in a Faroese ballad (p. 172), and an allusion to it in the *Olafsdrápa* of Sighvat, eleventh century.



**OBSCURITIES AND CONTRADICTIONS.** Sometimes it is difficult to reconcile Saxo's statements with one another. In such cases it becomes our task to find out whether the fault lies with Saxo himself; or whether the discrepancy existed already in the lay on which he based his composition; or whether, again, it is due to an attempt to reconcile the contents of several differing lays.

The beginning of Biarki's monologue has caused perplexity among scholars. In order to remove the difficulty P. E. Müller advanced the hypothesis that Saxo welded together two poems, the one containing the exhortations of the warriors, the other, the succeeding dialogues between Biarki, Hialti, and Hrut; and his opinion is, in the main, concurred in by the two latest translators, Jantzen and Herrmann. The reasons for this hypothesis are (1) in stanza 19, Biarki buckles on his coat of mail whilst in stanza 21 he calls upon the warriors to throw away their byrnies; (2) in stanza 22 he mentions that he has slain Hiarvarth, whereas in reality, he has not yet had the opportunity to do so. P. E. Müller's guess does not solve the difficulty. The very fact that the saga contains the selfsame blending of the two poems he presupposes, renders their existence, to say the least, doubtful. As to the second point it is due to a misunderstanding. The word "hart" (*cervus*) contains no reference whatever to the name *Hiarðvar* (in Danish sources besides Saxo we find *Hiarwarth*, O. N. *Higrvarðr*). Even with Saxo's pronunciation of the name there was not sufficient similarity between these two words to make any confusion likely. This is a blunder, pardonable in the infancy of philology, but not very becoming to scholars in the year 1900. In the other case, to be sure, there is some confusion in the thought. In stanza 19 Biarki takes up sword and helmet and buckles on his coat of mail; whereas in stanza 21 he says to the warriors: "None of those doomed to die shall put on their byrnies, only the hindmost is to be protected by byrnie-rings; cast your shields on your backs, let us fight with open breasts." Now, is the fault to be laid at Saxo's door, or are his sources to be blamed? It is probable that a stanza with about these contents did exist in the lay; for here the saga has the corresponding words: *en eigi skal nú viðhlífast, ef vér skulum í Valhöll gista í kveld*. As the stanza is rendered here it does not clash with any other statement: Biarki urges the warriors not to hold their shields before them but to use only their swords — a statement frequently found in Old Norse sagas. The above sentence (in Saxo: *in tergum redeant clipei*) precisely corresponds with stanza 19 where we are told that Biarki has armed himself with sword, helmet, and byrnie, but not with his shield. The trouble is caused solely by his exhortation not to buckle on the byrnies; but then, these words are altogether absurd because the warriors had no opportunity to put on the byrnies, once they were in the thick of the battle. There is no probability that these words were contained in the lay, seeing that the saga does not have anything corresponding. And, for that matter, we know well enough that Saxo is ever ready to make a statement on his own responsibility.

Possibly, Saxo has made this statement altogether on his own account; possibly, there is an old Scandinavian custom at the bottom of it. The ex-

hortation we should naturally expect would be, not that the warriors are not to put on their byrnies, but that they are to take them off after their blood had been fired by the battle (thus, e.g., in the *Hakonarmal*: *hrauðek ór herváðum*); and there is no reason to believe that the lay did not contain such a statement. The objection might be made that when Biarki himself had buckled on his byrnie, in stanza 19, he would not, in stanza 21, call on his warriors to throw theirs off. However, we must remember that in the lay the perspective of time is foreshortened in the highest degree. Each succeeding stanza frequently indicates a new stage in the action; and every time the lay returns to the progress of the battle, after some interruption (the parenthetical account of Biarki's youth and Hrolf's generosity), it has taken on new turns, each time the worse for Hrolf's men.\* I am not maintaining, then, that it is necessary to put such an original meaning into Saxo's words. I am saying only that it would agree with a custom of northern antiquity and with the manner of the *Biarkamal* if such a thought does lie at the bottom of his words. The reason why Saxo did not understand it fully was, probably, that the tight-fitting coats of mail of the twelfth century could not be stripped off as easily as those of the tenth century.

Concerning Hrolf's death we find the following statements: (1) during the struggle by the castle-gate (Saxo, S. line 88, our stanza 8): *rex perit, et miseram sors ultima corripit urbem*; (2) line 147 (our stanza 15): *unde liquet regem, claro jam funere functum, præclaros egisse dies*; (3) line 150, (*ibid.*), *dum viveret omnia vicit*. On the other hand he is mentioned as living in lines 165-167 (our stanza 17):

Attamen hic inter discrimina fataque belli  
Frothonis video lætum arridere nepotem,  
qui Sirt- (read: Furi-) vallinos auro conseverat agros.

The latest German translator of Saxo, Dr. Paul Herrmann, has attempted to explain away this contradiction. He translates the passages: (1) "Nun ist verloren der könig [*rex perit*], es naht der stadt das verderben" (*nicht* "er ist gefallen," denn er lebt noch am schlusse des gedichts); (2) "Wenn dieser könig nunmehr in ruhmvollen tode dahinsinkt" [so (bedingend) ist 'jam functum' zu fassen]; (3) "besiegte er alles im leben." However, in the first place, these renderings depart too strongly from the direct meaning of the words. Furthermore, the interpretation of the thought of the poem is certainly incorrect since the encomium of Hrolf, more particularly the comparison with the stag (found also in the encomiums of several Eddic poems, cf. comment on stanza 15), presupposes that he has fallen.

The trouble lies, probably, not in the three passages which mention Hrolf's fall, but rather in the one which mentions him as still living. It is of decisive importance if we can determine the original text which underlies

\* In this connection it is to be remembered that Biarki's retrospective account was very probably a little longer. One or two stanzas of which Saxo has no trace seem suggested by the account of the saga (cf. notes to stanza 30 and to stanza 20,1).

Saxo's three hexameters. Two alliterative verses are quite certain: *Frothonis nepos — Furivallinos agros* — sowed the gold (*auro conseruat*) — glad (*lætus*). But these lines would make up a half-stanza and leave no room for the words in question which say that Hrolf is still among the living (*Attamen hic inter discrimina fataque belli . . . video*). Nor is there room for these words in the second part of this stanza; for it is to contain the thought logically following that the housecarls, too, will now gladly accompany him into death (*Nos quoque*, etc.). For this reason the words which cause the difficulty cannot have stood in the stanza which Saxo reproduces. They must either have been taken from some other stanza or else be Saxo's own addition.

The question then arises as to whether one may accuse Saxo of the inattentiveness of letting Hrolf be slain and, later on, speaking of him as still alive. As is well known, the even progress of narrative is not Saxo's strong point. Thus he has Athisl slain (Saxo, p. 88), and then die again (Saxo, p. 121): he has Harold Wartooth born twice and of different parents (Saxo, pp. 337 and 361); not to mention his introduction of persons without using them in the action (e.g., Ingiald's sister Asa), or his using persons without introducing them (e.g., Regner's wife Svanlög). Just because he abandons himself so passionately to the lyrical aspect of the old song we may credit him with having been carried away by certain expressions (as here about Hrolf, glad in mind).

Other translators (thus Jantzen) have ventured the opinion that Saxo has here welded together two old poems. But the burden of the proof will certainly rest upon them to show that the words in question actually stood in any old song whatsoever.

### 3. HROLF'S WARRIORS

Should any one ask what the contents of the Biarkamal are, one may answer that it is a song about Hrolf's fall. He is the chief personage in the sense that he is kept in mind from first to last; no thought is too high to give expression to his excellence, no deed too great to be done for his sake. But he is, at the same time, if not quite the superhuman, still the superdramatic ideal. The poet has avoided bringing him on the scene — however near the thought to do so — in order not to weaken this impression of sublimity. This ideal figure is still more narrowly confined through the poet's not making the entirety of Hrolf's heroic greatness the subject of the lay. None of the warlike exploits of his life are

pointed out, only his generosity. The poet never tires of enumerating the swords and byrnies, the helmets and gold rings which the king gave to his warriors, and the marriages and estates he helped them to. Of the deeds of Hrolf, only the least — his victory over Hrcerek — is mentioned; for this it was which afforded him the opportunity to distribute gold among his men. Of his bold expedition to Upsala only his flight is referred to; for on that occasion he strewed the gold with prodigal hands on the plain. If Hrolf's own life concerns the poet but little, we hear still less about his ancestors or about his kindred. There is no mention either of his father, or the palmiest days of Hroar's rule, or even of Halfdan, as founder of the new royal power. By an ironic chance, only that Hrcerek is mentioned whom Hrolf deprived of the throne. No personal relation connects the figure of this king with the life of men about him; he is an ideal, hovering above them and inciting his battling housecarls to superhuman exertions when certain death awaits them.

The living and acting characters are Hrolf's warriors. They are on the scene of the song from first to last, from the time they are summoned by Hialti's stirring call until they all have fallen. The poet dwells on the battle in all its details. We see the company take up their arms, we witness the first encounter with the army of the Gauts and the fierce fight in the castle gates. Even after Hrolf has fallen, his warriors draw up their lines for renewed and stubborn combat until, with fierce contempt of death, they throw themselves upon their enemies, with both hands gripping the hilts of their

swords and casting their shields on their backs. The little band is scattered, and, fighting each by himself, the barons succumb one by one to the hordes of their enemies. The battle shifts to another quarter, and the expiring heroes have the opportunity to exchange their last words and to drop at the feet of their lord. And while the action is progressing, image after image of the past or the present flits before the poet's vision. He follows each phase of the warriors' life; he rejoices to see the housecarls buckle on their byrnies and grasp their shields, to see the king handing out gifts to his faithful followers: "rings, helms, short swords, and shining mail coats." The clash of arms reverberates through the song, not the whistle of the arrow or the hum of the bow strings, but the din of sword blows and the ring of helmets. Most often, though, a subdued booming of shields from the densely massed warriors is intermingled with the clinking of byrnie-rings; all sounding like a joyous chorus in the midst of death and destruction.

In these scenes the poet feels himself at home. He has all the predilections of a king's man. He loves the use of arms and he loves the gold that is given him as his meed; in his thoughts he sees it lying in open heaps that are being divided among faithful housecarls. But both his love of arms and thirst for gold are blended in his heartfelt loyalty to his king and lord who furnishes the chances for warlike deeds and who rewards them. Gratitude for gifts received he mentions as lying at the bottom of the housecarl's relation to his lord. We may motivate it still more deeply by designating the ancient

fidelity of our race, its attachment to the lord one's self has chosen, as the chief element in his conception of this relation.

The poem begins and unfolds as a song of praise on the life of the warrior in general; but, later, a single figure presents itself and embodies all the elements of the warrior's life. It is Biarki. He is the ideal warrior, yet he retains his individuality. We see this character before us in all its size and strength, with a brow against which a sword may be shattered; the hero who grew up on the little weather-beaten desert island, who has been tried in the hardest combats, who is slow to move when called to battle, and who remains cool at the scornful words of provocation uttered by Hialti. His figure gradually takes shape, from the first time we hear him drowsily calling to his page, till we see him, afterwards, buckle on his coat of mail and grasp his shield. We hear each blow he strikes and see the foemen he fells. We are reminded of the time when he overcame Agnar after desperate combat; and finally, when the battle dies down, he stands up mighty and great, stern by the side of his sorrowing wife, defying the very power of Othin. Thus he meets the death he prizes most highly, and sinks down by Hrolf's head.

Nevertheless, the poet is for no moment in doubt about his hero's limitations. There are two grand types which are found throughout Northern heroic poetry: the royal hero, noble and versatile in the conduct of his life, and most often showing its finest flower in love; and the warrior, enormously strong and defiantly conscious of his strength, insensible to gentler feelings, a

stranger to love, at any rate to its deeper and more spiritual manifestations. Intrepidity and fierceness are his most prominent characteristics. In heroic poetry, this warrior type frequently accompanies the king by way of contrast. By the side of Helgi Hundingsbani we find the blustering Sinfiotli; the poetic Gunnar is contrasted with Hogni \* who is hard as iron. Thus Biarki with all his strength is characterized by comparison with the high-minded Hrolf. But at the same time tradition gives him as wife Hrut, the sister of the celebrated King of Leire; and the poet has not neglected to make use of this contrast between the woman of royal birth and her giant-strong husband. Quite early in the poem we have a glimpse of her figure, when Hialti calls the fair-haired daughter of the Scyldings forth from her bower so that she may escape the dangers of the battle. And when the rage of the battle has abated we see Hrut stand by the side of the dying Biarki. She bows her head to fate, speaking reverently of the mighty godhead which in this hour robs her of all those dearest to her; but he rages with all the unconquerable defiance of the mighty warrior against Othin, the cause of all this misfortune, and longs to shatter him with his sword. The points of view of the woman of royal birth and of the rough warrior here offer a mighty contrast. This is seen also in another respect. Hrut stands by Biarki with the fidelity which the queens of the heroic lays always show their dying husbands; the royal maiden's nature consists essentially in her surrender in love.

\* Cf. the characterization of the warrior type given by Finnur Jónsson in his *Oldn. Literaturs Historie*, i, 89.

Biarki, on the other hand, is curiously little occupied with the thought of their parting. Deep love seems not to be part of his nature. In this respect, then, he is like the other great warriors of the heroic lays.

There is a certain connection with the Eddic poems in this very scene: the sternness of the warrior is shown in glaring contrast with the fine feelings of a woman. We are reminded of Hogni when he himself announces to Guthrun the slaying of her husband, or of Hamthir who cruelly reminds his mother of her greatest sorrow. In so far, the poet follows the style of a certain period. Still there is a difference. Sternness is not lacking in the figure of Biarki; but there is no coarseness either, nor any intentional indignity to the woman he is facing. There is only one thought in the hero's mind, devotion to his king; and this thought is raised to be not his alone, but the essential idea of the whole poem. The contrast with the gentle woman is brought out by the poet, undoubtedly in the manner of older heroic lays, but in such fashion that it merges with Biarki's life purpose. He is the traditional type of the warrior in a new and nobler form.

The poet's power to individualize the type of warrior as represented by Biarki is felt also in the persons who are immediately associated with him. One of them, Hialti, youthfully brisk and cheerful, even in the presence of death, urging on and mocking, is the typical young warrior; still, his liveliness seems to serve merely as a foil to Biarki's massive seriousness. No one is in doubt that Biarki's place is by the head of his fallen king and Hialti's only by his feet. The two heroes make



one think of the paladins Roland and Oliver and their last fight in the valley of Ronceval, as described in the Song of Roland. One is quick to notice how penetrating is the limning of character in the Northern lay as compared with the mere joy of fighting during the Age of Chivalry. The two peers among the paladins of Charlemagne resemble each other in an irritating manner; the one is but a few ells taller, spiritually, than his companion in arms. The two thanes of Hrolf cannot approach each other without their difference being immediately evident. Hialti is not only the forward youth; there is also a more personal relation, Biarki assuming rather the character of foster-father to him, which is especially noticeable toward the end of the lay, when Biarki points out to him his place to die by his king's body.

The poet contrasts still one more figure with Biarki, the war-hardened prince Agnar Ingialdson. He is mentioned as a most dangerous adversary; for if his sword blade had not snapped, Biarki would scarcely have escaped with his life from the combat. As it was, Biarki felled him and he died laughing. Though Biarki's equal in strength, he is nevertheless unlike him. There is a strange difference between Biarki's death at Hrolf's head, and Agnar's laugh. This thought, that the hero dies with laughter on his lips, was formerly held to be the supreme expression of the heroic spirit of the North. However, in the older poems this trait never is attributed to the greatest heroes. A subordinate figure like Agnar enters laughing into the realm of death; Hogni laughs when they cut out his heart. This is characteristic of

the strong warrior, his defiant consciousness of strength worked out to its last consequence — worked out to a grimace. For the real heroes know well what is the worth of life and submit with soberness to the fate they cannot avert. Only a post-heroic period, the twelfth or thirteenth centuries, makes Ragnar lothbrok sing his cheerful song of death in the serpents' den: "The time of life is passing, laughing I die." \* In the *Atlakviða* it is not the delicately organized Gunnar, but the coarse Högni who dies laughing. The *Biarkamal* not only takes this motif away from its chief hero, but transfers it to a warrior among his enemies. Biarki and Agnar have, to be sure, the same tremendous strength of body and show the same uncurbed spirit of defiance in their hour of death — the Danish hero threatening Othin and the son of Ingiald laughing at death. But there is this difference: Agnar has no other interest beyond the warrior's self-centered and unconquerable spirit, whereas Biarki is ennobled by his implicit devotion to his master. This spiritualizes his death.

#### 4. BIARKI, HRUT, HÖEKING

The figure of Biarki certainly must owe its origin to some historic reality. The greatest exploit of his life, the slaying of Agnar, is indeed an integral part of the victorious struggle of the Danes against the Heathobards. It is the only episode of that great struggle between the two peoples which was remembered in

\* *Krakumál*, last verse; cf. the conclusion of the *Lay of Innstein*, *Hálfssaga*, c. 13: þat munu seggir at soggum gera, at Hálfir konungr hlæjandi dó; cf. also *Ali hinn frækni* in the *Skjöldunga saga* (Arngrim, c. 9; *Danmarks Heltedigtning*, ii, 133). As we see, this is a motif occurring always in the younger sources.

later Northern tradition. The other names that are connected with Biarki's life likewise point to ancient tradition and, hence, to real events.

There is, first, Hrolf's sister, who in Saxo's Latinized form is called *Ruta*. Scholars generally consider this name identical with that of the valkyria *Róta*; but this identification is objectionable for several reasons: (1) Biarki's wife is not a supernatural being, (2) *Ruta* and *Rota* do not correspond sound for sound, (3) it is highly questionable whether there ever was any valkyria *Rota*, as *Rosta* (i.e., battle) seems to be the preferable reading. Her name must have begun with *Hr-* for it has to alliterate with *hvít* and *hǫfuð*.\* The northern form corresponding to Saxo's *Ruta* would then be *Hrút*. Such a woman's name does not, to be sure, exist in the sources, but it is to be remembered that our knowledge of women's names is at best scanty. On the other hand, there occurs the corresponding man's name *Hrútr* regularly, answering to the feminine *Hrút*. This name, *Hrútr*, was rather common during the Viking Age. In Denmark it occurs on the Vordingborg runestone (Zealand) and in the Middle Ages it was borne as a surname by a noble Zealand family.†

We would, then, have another name beginning with H, which is the uniform characteristic of the line of

\* *Tu quoque consurgens niveum caput exere, Ruta*; cf. above, p. 111.

† Wimmer, *Danske runemindesmærker*, ii, 409; *SRD*, ix, 611; Lind, *Norsk-isl. dopnamn*, 593; Jónsson, *Tilnavne* (*Aarbøger*, 1907) 304. The name *Hrutr* is identical with Old Norse *hrútr*, a ram. So it might be supposed that the person's name had in late times resulted from an epithet; but this is contradicted by its occurrence in widely separated districts of Scandinavia in the tenth century, whereas the surname occurs only in the thirteenth century and is locally circumscribed.

Halfdan, and in so far it may claim a greater age among the names of the Scyldings than, e.g., Skuld. (One might be tempted, by the way, to guess that the form Hrut is not original, but that she, like all of her nearest relatives, had a name with *Hróð-* as a component element; in that case, the change is like the one we see when an Icelandic name Hrokr was substituted for *Hrærekr*, (*A. S. Hréðric*).

An old tradition seems to be preserved in the name of the sword Hœking which was shattered by the blow against Biarki's brow (stanza 23). The sword-name *Hækingr* is found also in the Norwegian and Icelandic poetic vocabulary, but most probably owes its origin to the Biarkamal. On the other hand, a satisfactory etymological explanation of the word does not seem possible with the help of Scandinavian material alone; for it can scarcely be connected with *hækja* "crutch," or with *hækill* "knee-joint." Going back to the oldest traditions as found in the English epics, the explanation is simple enough: Hœking signifies "the sword which Hok possessed." Hok (*Hóð*), both in Beowulf and the Finnsburg fragment, is the name of a Danish warrior famed from the struggle with the Frisians. The Hœking of the Biarkamal is, then, taken from some older lay describing the deeds performed during the period of the Halfdan dynasty.

The formation *Hækingr* from *Hók* is paralleled by *Húnláfiŋ* "the sword owned by Hunlaf," Hengest's sword in Beowulf (line 1144) — provided this is the correct reading.\* It also agrees with the predilection of the older Runic language for derivatives in -ing.

\* Bugge, *PBB*, xii, 32 and most scholars following him read: *Hun Láfiŋ*.

## 146 THE HEROIC LEGENDS OF DENMARK

Its formation is opposed, however, to the usage during the Viking Period which, in similar cases, favored compound names.\* In general, sword names in -ing are characteristic of the very oldest poetic style. In *Beowulf* all sword names have this ending (*Hrunting*, *Nægling*, *Láfang* or *Húnláfang*). The same formation is seen in the sword names *Hæking* and *Tyrfang*, of Scandinavian heroic poetry, the meaning of which scarcely was clear to the poets of our ancient lays (very probably, the sword owned by *Hok* and *Torfi*). Then there are sword names in -ing, derived from common adjectives, which undoubtedly represent a later layer, as e.g., *Hvíting* and *Lýsing* in the story of *Hildebrand*, *Hrolf kraki's Skofnungr*, and a number of Skaldic phrases (cf. *Sn. Edda*, i, 565–568). Finally, the last stage of development is seen in the historic sword names of the Viking Age, when the ending -ing is, to my knowledge, unknown. On the other hand, the other sword name occurring in the *Biarkamal*, *Snyrtir*, has parallels in the Viking Period (cf. *Olaf the Saint's Hneitir*); nor does anything else indicate that this name has any connection with the older poetry.

In connection with the stem *Hók* we must mention a figure in Old Norse poetry which has, so far, been left unexplained. In a list of names in the Third Grammatical Treatise, 15, 17, we are told that *Hækingr* (*Hekingr*, *hokingr*) was a sea king; but there is no definite information about him anywhere in Norn literature. Light is thrown on him only in the Anglo-Saxon poems *Widsith*, *Finnsburg*, and *Beowulf*; the *Hœkings* (*Hôcingas*) are the family, or troop of warriors, led by *Hôc*, within the Danish kingdom, and famous through their viking expedition against the Frisians; but Norn tradition scarcely knew more about this than that “*Hœking*” stood in some connection with warrior life and the sea. As ill defined is the *Heklingr* who is mentioned twice in a verse in hero sagas (*Hálfssaga*, c. 3, *Ragnarssaga*, c. 21) where the spectre in the barrow designates himself as one of the *Heklings holdar* “men of Hekling”; similarly the King Hekling who is said to have slain king Agvald on Agvaldnes (*Fms.*, ii, 26; Varium in the *Oláfssaga Tryggvasonar*). Etymologi-

\* E. g., *Dáinsleif*, *Kaldhamarsnautr*. The relation is, then, the same as in the case of the place names: the ending -ing being Teutonic; whereas the Viking Period has only compounds showing the owner's name (with -*stað*, -*thorp*; and, at the beginning of historic times, -*leif*).

cally it is a patronymic, a derivative from the name of the sea king Haki; though in Norn consciousness Hœkingr and Heklingr undoubtedly were variants for an indefinite designation of a sea king or sea warrior in the times of yore.

#### 5. HIALTI, SKULD

While the figure of Biarki is surrounded by old traditions and old names that hark back to the Migration of Nations, the other hero of our song shares none of them. He reveals no other history than the part the poet has him play in his song.

Hialti is here the young, buoyant warrior who assembles the troop of the housecarls for battle, who gives expression to their devotion to their king, and who in death finds the loyal housecarl's place at his king's feet. But the poet attributes to him no personal history of the same kind as Biarki's; he asks not about his birthplace, knows of no great deed performed by him of yore, neither does he mention any exploit performed by him in his last battle. He is, if we rely only on the Biarkamal, a warrior who has not as yet performed any deed of valor. We may suspect the reason for this unusual fact. This youthfully buoyant type of warrior, who is the mouthpiece for the poet's best and noblest thoughts, was created for this very purpose, namely to be the spokesman for the loyalty of the warriors of Hrolf. It is for this reason that he has no personal history, that not even the gifts he has received from his beloved king are mentioned; his only characteristic feature is his youth, and this feature bears no particular relation to Hrolf and his warriors, but is set rather as a contrast to the seasoned and hoary Biarki.

None other than the poet of the Biarkamal himself has created Hialti; the skald's fundamental conceptions of the life of the king's men and the loyalty of the housecarls have given him the breath of life. Their bravery, their love of war, their gratitude, even their blustering and taunting ways, all has taken body in this one figure, and an imperishable youth animates his stirring song. Whenever Hialti is alone on the scene there is lyrical atmosphere but very little decisive action; only when he appears together with Biarki's impressive figure does the situation become dramatic. It is precisely through this pulsating change between action and lyric expressiveness that the poem unfolds in rich beauty.

At a later date, Hialti was conceived to be as historic a personage as Biarki, in fact was almost made the favorite hero. But this generally happens with the characters of heroic poetry at the hand of the changed conception of later times. It is but an evidence that the poet has given shape to his thought in such wise that he was understood and that he spoke to the heart of his countrymen so that they believed him.

In the Biarkamal we meet for the first time, too, a figure which is to play a large part in the traditions about Hrolf's fall. It is Skuld, Hiarvarth's wife and the instigator of his treason to Hrolf. The various sagas (perhaps even the Biarkamal) make her Hrolf's own sister.

Considering that she is given only passing mention in the Biarkamal, the thought suggests itself that she was no real person, but that another Skuld — one of the

norns or valkyrias — was meant, and that Hiarvarth's descent on Leire was made *at Skuldar ráði*, "by decree of the Fates." But it is difficult to deny that Skuld was the name of a real person who lived in Denmark. The *Leire Chronicle* relates that Hrolf gave his sister Skuld the whole district of Horn by the firth of Roskilde as a maintenance for herself and her maidens, and that she built the estate Skuldælev\* which since has preserved her name. Whether or no the hamlet of Skuldelev owes its name to the Skuld who was Hiarvarth's wife, the place-name does certainly bear witness to the fact that Skuld was a Danish name. The period during which it was used must date far back in the Iron Age; for the ending *-lev*, *-leif*, characterizes an old class of place names.† If, then, the name Skuld thus belongs to prehistoric times in Denmark and is not found thereafter — possibly, because no one was willing to bear the name of the guileful woman of the race of the Scyldings — it would seem probable that this name was present in the poem from the earliest times. But the name Skuldelev proves also that during prehistoric times there must

\* *Sororem suam nomine Sculd secum habuit . . . Cui provinciam Hornshæreth Sialandie ad pascendas puellas suas in expensam dedit, in qua villam edificavit, nomine Sculdælef unde nomen sumpsit (var. suscepit). SRD, i, 226.*

† J. Steenstrup, *Dansk Historisk tidsskrift*, sixth series, v, 353; cf. Sigurd Nygård, *ibid.*, seventh series, i, 89–109, and the author, *Dania*, v, 235–238. Note especially its connection with the heroic vocabulary of names and with the names of the Runic inscriptions dating from the Migration Period and from the first part of the Viking Age. A more definite dating would be possible if Steenstrup were right in explaining the origin of the names in *-lev* as due to a drawing of lots and subsequent division of the land among its conquerors; but this theory is at variance both with the etymology of the word *lev* and its only known meaning. All we know about the age of these names is that they are characteristic of Danish civilization or rather, the very oldest layer of Danish civilization, and that no more of them arise before the time when the Danes settled in England (ninth century).



have lived in the vicinity of Leire a woman named Skuld who was so rich that her landed property or estate preserved her name till later times. Such a woman is hardly to be sought elsewhere than in the great princely families; and who knows but that she was even this Hiarvarth's wife.

But; of course, the paucity of the material precludes any exact study of her life. All we know is that in the poetic form of the Hrolf tradition that has come down to us, she is prominent as the evil spirit whose envy and plotting starts the action. The fact that she is made Hrolf's sister in the poem shows the remodelling of the tradition; for this information cannot be reconciled — if we bear the customs of the times in mind — with the idea that Hiarvarth was really his cousin.

## CHAPTER III

### THE BIARKAMAL (CONTINUED)

#### 1. OTHIN IN THE BIARKAMAL

**T**HERE is a little scene toward the end of the Biarkamal, which in both character and thoughts differs from the other settings, and which has such bold lines that it will not fade from the memory of him who has come to know it. It is the scene in which Biarki drops exhausted, and calls to his wife, Hrut, to ask whether she cannot behold on the field the battle-lord, one-eyed Othin. She makes answer, "Look through my bended arm, after first having charmed your eye with the sign of victory. Then shall you see before you the god of battle." Biarki exclaims, "If I can set eyes on Frigg's one-eyed spouse, even if he be covered by his white shield and be governing his mighty steed, he shall not escape unharmed from Leire; the warrior has the right to fell the god of war."

It is necessary to call attention, in passing, to several details in this scene which have puzzled scholars for some time but which now have been satisfactorily explained. One of them is the direction that Biarki must peer through his wife's bent arm in order to catch sight of Othin. After several scholars had made unsuccessful attempts to explain this belief, the learned editor Stephanius hit on the correct solution by referring to a piece of Danish superstition: he who himself is "second-

sighted" (i.e., able to see apparitions) can communicate this power to others by letting them stand behind him, close by his side, and having them peer three times through his bent arm, which is supported on his hip whilst he is muttering magic incantations; thus they will be able to see, not only apparitions, but all beings that are hovering in the air. The erudite Brynjolf Sveinsson eagerly accepted this explanation, mentioning that the same practice was common in Iceland. Still later, Jakob Grimm in his *Deutsche Mythologie* called attention to the fact that in Northern Germany this belief relates precisely to the popular conceptions of Othin: in the Odensberg in Hesse "Kaiser Karl" (Charlemagne) holds himself concealed; people who passed by the mountain were able to hear him fare forth with his warriors, but could not see them. Then came a wise man to them who told them that if they looked through the ring he formed by setting his hand on his hip, they would be able to see the whole host marching in and out of the mountain.\*

It is by no means as clear what may be the significance of the 'sign of victory' (*victrici signo*) with which Biarki is to mark himself before he can see Othin. As to its use, of course, there can be no doubt. It plays the same part as the magic incantations do in the popular superstition mentioned above; it is the other condition necessary to give the magic act (of looking through some one's bent arm) its full power. But as to the nature of this "sign of victory" we can make only surmises. Still its mean-

\* Stephanus, *Notæ uberiores in Saxonem* (1644, Folio, pp. 80-81); Grimm, *Myth.*, 3d ed., p. 891; cf. Feilberg, *Jysk ordbog*, iii, sub. 'se'.

ing was guessed no doubt correctly by old Brynjolf Sveinsson who in *victrici signo* recognized the *sigrúnar*, i.e., victory (or, rather, battle) runes, of the Edda; for by runes we are to understand, not only single letters, but any signs endowed with magic force. As a proof of the correctness of the word *sigrúnar* in the Biarkamal text we may point to its alliterating with *signa*, which word certainly was used in the significance of consecrating with some sacred symbol. The sign itself was, most likely, made in the air with the finger, in the same manner as when Hakon the Good consecrated the sacrificial horn and the heathens supposed his cross-sign to be the sign of Thor (*Heimskringla, Hákonarsaga góða*, c. 17).

More essential than the means to see the invisible powers is the scene itself in which Othin rides over the battle field as the one-eyed god of battle, recognizable by his high steed and his white shield. He comes as the divinity which takes possession of all those who have died on the field and leads his newly won followers to Valhalla. At the same time he is the god of battle, he who decides the outcome of the struggle.

This conception of Othin as fetching the dead to Valhalla is remarkable in differing from all that is told about him elsewhere in Norse poetry. In the *Eiríksmál* Othin awakes with a presentiment of the arrival of excellent warriors who are to make their home in his hall. In the *Hákonarmál* he sits calmly, even when the realm of Norway is the stake of battle, and only dispatches his valkyrias to bring about the decision. The heroic lays likewise entrust the matter of choosing the dead for Othin to the valkyrias (who may disobey him,

cf. *Helreið Brynhildar*). When Othin himself visits the battle field he does not come as the invisible god of death, but in human guise and with a particular intention, as in the Bravalla battle and at the fall of king Sigmund. This ride of Othin over the battle field does not, then, agree with the conception of him shown in the heroic and mythologic lays of the Norse skalds. Rather, it harks back to an older and simpler conception of Othin in which the god who rides his steed Sleipnir and chooses the dead is not two different personages but exhibits two closely allied manifestations. This simple popular belief is found also in an occurrence which, according to nearly contemporaneous witnesses, took place in southern Norway, in the year 1208. A smith is said to have seen Othin come riding and to have shod his horse; he was then on his way to Sweden in order to be present at the battle of Lena.\* Moreover a background is given these scenes by the belief in Othin's nocturnal ridings and huntings that play so great a rôle in southern Scandinavia and northern Germany. In Jutland people believe that his coming presages war or calamities; according to the English superstition, the wild huntsman fetches those who are to die and leads them away on his headlong ride.† These popular traditions determine our understanding of the presence of Othin at the battle about Leire. It is not any special occurrence but an incident in his constant riding

\* *Konungasögur*, Unger's ed., p. 237. Cf. *Hárbarðsljóð*, 24, "I was in Val-land, followed battles, princes I egged on, *ibid.*, 16: "I was with Fiqlvar five whole winters" — everywhere in human guise.

† Cf. the author's "Odinsjageren i Jylland," *Dania*, viii, 139-173, especially p. 159.

about the world; he is always present in battle in order to fetch those who belong to him.

Besides having a mythologic aspect, this scene has also a personal side, Biarki's relation to Othin. He asks whether Othin is present, in order to pit himself against him and avenge the king's death on him who more than any mortal man decides about the outcome of the battle. The poet has idealized Hrolf's generous and royal figure and the duty of loyalty to one's chosen and sworn king. Now he draws the logical conclusion of all this: rebellion and struggle against any power which opposes this divinity of his own making. Biarki is not satisfied with any trifling object of his rage: it is the king of the gods, the supreme lord over life and death, against whom he rebels.

Some may be inclined to explain the entire situation by declaring that the poet denies Heathendom and adheres to Christianity. But this would only deprive the scene of its force without making it any more natural. For, in fact, the poet gives implicit credence to Othin's power over life and death; no doubt is uttered that he is really riding over the battlefield to fetch the dead. Of course the poet does not believe that the follower of the Danish king is able to overcome the ruler of Valhalla. Still less is there a trace of any belief that Othin is an evil and dangerous spirit. With the profoundest reverence, Hrut calls her husband's attention to Othin's riding over the battlefield; the words she uses would be impossible in the song of a Christian poet. Neither does the character of the spokesman in any way lend color to the opinion that the poet is an adherent

of the new teaching. The figure of Hrut is instinct with calm, royal dignity, and with tender poetic feeling, from the very first time she lifts her "fair head," warned by Hialti's call, until she speaks words of religious submission to her enraged husband. A womanly figure of this kind is never represented as at fault in any Norse heroic lay; and no Christian poet of Teutonic antiquity would have chosen her as spokesman for heathendom.

The fact is, the whole scene is dominated, not by any religious thoughts, but by a purely poetic creative faculty. Hrut with her belief is opposed to Biarki with his defiance, because no greater contrast is thinkable than that of the noble, tender woman, with her religious submissiveness, over against Biarki, with his warlike inflexibility, his fierce defiance of all powers, and his confidence in his own strength. The poet recognizes the religious justification of Hrut's conception; there is certainly some purpose in letting the royal personage of the poem enunciate it; but her faith does not make him refrain from letting Biarki challenge Othin himself, if by this means he can carry through the basic idea of the song to the final consequences.

It is possible that the period which could produce such a scene was one of disintegration with regard to the ancient worship of the Æsir. The teachings concerning the existence of the gods would continue in force, but the personal relation to them had ceased. The warrior fell dying on the field of battle without submitting to the power of Othin.

There exists another Scandinavian poem in which the line of thought resembles that of the Biarkamal, in this

scene, to a remarkable degree. It is Egil Skallagrims-son's poem *Sonartorrek*, "The Son's Loss," composed when the skald's dearest son had perished at sea, and conceived in the same frame of mind as when Biarki resents the death of his beloved king. Egil has a warrior's nature which reminds one decidedly of the type of strong warriors found in the heroic lays. Egil's mind harbors the same thoughts as does Biarki's, against the power which has robbed him of what was dearest to him: "Could I vindicate my cause by the sword," he then would soon cease to live, "the ale-brewer of the gods (i.e., the seagod Ægir); if I could overcome the dangerous brother of the wind, then would I fight with Ægir's wife (the billow). But," he adds, conscious of his old age, "meseems I have not sufficient strength in this matter; all the people are now aware of the old man's helplessness." And, toward the end of the poem, after having enumerated the dear ones he has lost, he squares accounts with Othin: "I stood well with the lord of the spear; in good cheer did I have faith in him, until the lord of the chariot, the bestower of victory, broke his friendship with me. Nor do I worship Vili's brother, the chiefest of the gods, because I find joy in it; but Mimir's friend has made amends for my sorrow which I deem a blessing: the Fenris-wolf's warlike foe has given me an accomplishment without defect (his gift as skald); and he has given me the mind to make open enemies of the secret plotters against me."

Thus does the old viking square accounts with "the chiefest of the gods." His former attitude of confidence in him can be regained no more; but he will be able to



exist on the remainders of their former friendship for the little time that is still granted him to live. At the bottom of both Egil's and Biarki's sentiment lies the same defiance of the divinity; but the skald's complaint ends in everyday fashion with a compromise, the old man finding satisfaction in resignation. Biarki, on the other hand, stands at the zenith of his power and at the crisis of his life. He will have no compromise; if Othin is not his friend, the god must take him as his foe. His warrior nature demands that every relation be decided by the sword, whether for or against.

## 2. THE HOUSECARLS' DEATH AND LATER FAME

The conceptions of the poet of the Biarkamal are not based on a belief in Othin. To him the noblest thing in life is not dependent on the power of any one divinity; it is, rather, a definite end for human action, a duty. And this end is the loyalty of the servant to his master. He is to follow his liege lord not only till death, but in death.

This thought appears again and again, among all the tribes of the Teutonic race. In Denmark, the proud runic monuments are eloquent about Toki Gormsson "who did not flee at Upsala" and about the faithful housecarls who followed him into death about 980. But we may also seek testimony among so remote a tribe as the Herulians in the service of the Greek emperor in the year 552; the army is caught by surprise and flees, only the chieftain Fulkaris and his company of spearmen offer resistance. "After heroic fight against superior numbers he falls upon his shield, and upon his

body fall all those who had made a stand with him." \* Truly, this sounds like a repetition of the fall of Hrolf kraki and his warriors.

Of an earlier battle between Emperor Julianus and the Alemanni (357 A.D.) this episode is told: after the terrible slaughter among his men, King Knodomar was still surrounded by two hundred of his followers "who, all of them, would rather bear chains than suffer the ignominy of surviving their king or, if that had to be, would die for him." † The entire relation between the chieftain and his followers is clearly indicated by Tacitus (*Germania*, c. 14): "It is considered a disgrace to the chieftain if any one exceed him in bravery during battle, and a disgrace to his followers not to equal the bravery of their chieftain. It is an ignominy for life to survive one's chieftain and to escape from battle; him they are to shield and to shelter, and to add their deeds to his glory is their most sacred duty; the chieftain fights for victory, the followers for their chieftain."

It is necessary to add that this custom does not seem to have been peculiar to the Teutonic tribes alone. A Roman author tells about the Celtiberians in Spain that they "sacrifice themselves for their king and refuse to live after his death." Among the Gauls of Southwestern France, Cæsar ‡ found this custom developed to a regular institution. He relates how the chieftain Adietanus

\* Agathias, *Historiæ*, i, 15 ("spear-bearers" is the Greek designation for bodyguard and staff); *sár fló þgi at Uppsölum*; Wimmer, *Danske runemindesmærker*, i, 86 ff.

† Ammianus Marcellinus, book 16, c. 12.

‡ Cæsar, *De bello Gallico*, iii, c. 22; Servius Grammaticus ad Vergilii *Georgica*, iv, ll. 117-118: *Trazit hoc de Celtiberum more, qui, ut in Sallustio legimus, se regibus devotent et post eos vitam refutant.*

makes a sally “with six hundred faithful ones whom they call *soldurii*; their condition of service is that they are to have in common all property with him whose friends they have chosen to be, and if any peril betide him, they are to undergo the same danger or kill themselves; there has not in the memory of man been one who shunned death after he to whom he had sworn allegiance had been slain.”

What first appeared to be the characteristic motif of a single poem, then the ideal of a tribe, thus proves to have been spread over a large territory in middle Europe at a certain period — about the beginning of the Iron Age. This obligation to follow one's lord in death is thus seen to be based on the conception of these times concerning the entrance into the life beyond. Cæsar testifies that the Gauls “lay on the pyre all that had been dear to the living; it is still in the memory of man that the slaves and clients the dead had loved were burned at complete burials together with his other property.” The same thought is echoed in the Norse *Sigurðarkviða*, when Brynhild kills her handmaids and herself, having ordered the bodies to be laid on the funeral pile beside Sigurth: “Hel's gate will not strike his heel if my flock follow him hence.” The burial custom of laying a slave by the side of the departed may be traced vaguely back to the earliest history of Iceland. Its origin must be sought in much older times. Among the Gauls it must be connected with their solid and warlike belief in immortality, concerning which both written tradition and prehistoric graves furnish testimony. We can see these robust con-

ceptions of immortality reach the North and set their stamp on the objects laid in the grave in the course of the various periods of the Iron Age. Granted such conceptions, a common death is no longer compulsion but a joy; slaves and henchmen choose to serve in the life beyond the master whom they have loved in this world. We find practically the same conception among the clients of the Gallic chieftain who let themselves be killed and burned on the funeral pile of their lord, and among the Celtiberians and Teutons who do not wish to survive their king on the battlefield. The purpose — given the same civilization and religion — is the same, to continue their life together in the hereafter.

But gradually the religious presuppositions for this clinging together of chieftain and his followers disappeared. In the Norse lays of the Viking Period another thought appeared instead. Eric Bloody-axe arrives in Valhalla with five kings behind him, i.e., his slain foes. Hakon is invited by the gods to Valhalla “with a great host” (*með her mikinn*), but it is the army of his enemy. Harold Wartooth intends to visit Othin “with all the greater host,” that is, with all those who have fallen in the Bravalla battle. The personal connection between chieftain and henchmen is forgotten, and the reason therefor must be that the realm of the departed no longer housed such limited associations but, according to Norse — and presumably also Teutonic — conception now was the huge hall in which one ruler over the dead gathered all without distinction. There was no longer any use for separate troops following their chieftain: there was but one chieftain, Othin, and all were his men.

In this twofold relation, the religious origin and later weakening of the belief, we have the key for understanding the great power which the conviction of dying as a faithful follower exercised over the henchmen of Teutonic princes. On the one hand we see its religious origin and force as an old and solemn custom. On the other, the real understanding of it is pushed into the background and a new significance is substituted. This new teaching then becomes one of the fundamental traits in the Teutonic peoples' view of life; loyalty becomes an honor and a duty, a quality to be maintained by man at all costs. It shows the same strong idealism seen in Signe's following Hagbarth into death, and Sigurth's laying his drawn sword between himself and the maiden he desires: life and happiness may be forfeited, but the better part of one is saved providing one has fulfilled one's highest duty. The death of the king's men is at one with this fundamental thought. It has no longer any purpose of its own, but is the great criterion, the pledge, of one having been true to the vow of faithfulness. In reading the oldest history of the Teutonic nations one will be seized, again and again, with astonishment at the recklessness with which men fling their lives away when they feel their honor threatened. The death as faithful follower is the most steadily recurring, the most pointed form of this idea; the ideal lives on, man perishes.

On these conceptions rests the poetic value of the *motif* of the faithful follower's death. The view of life of the whole period blossoms into beauty in this relation.

It is noteworthy to observe how frequently a start is made, as it were, in the very oldest poems of our race, to compose a Biarkamal. There is, first, the Anglo-Saxon Finnsburg fragment in which Danish warriors are seen to defend themselves in the hall of the Frisian king against the Frisians who are rushing to the attack. It begins with a song encouraging to manful deeds, intoned by the leader of the men who are caught by surprise; and in the course of the poem loyalty to their liege is strongly brought out: "Never heard I sixty war-bears carry themselves more worthily in battle; never did henchmen better repay the sweet mead than when Hnæf was repaid by his young swains." — Still more close to the Biarkamal is the speech of encouragement in Beowulf where young Wiglaf exhorts the housecarls to help their king against the attack of the dragon.

"I remember the time, when mead we took,  
 what promise we made to this prince of ours  
 in the banquet-hall, to our breaker of rings,  
 for gear of combat to give him requital,  
 for hard-sword and helmet, if hap should bring  
 stress of this sort! Himself who chose us  
 from all his army to aid him now,  
 urged us to glory, and gave these treasures,  
 because he counted us keen with the spear  
 and hardy 'neath helm, though this hero-work  
 our leader hoped unhelped and alone  
 to finish for us, — folk-defender  
 who hath got him glory greater than all men  
 for daring deeds! Now the day is come  
 that our noble master has need of the might  
 of warriors stout. Let us stride along  
 the hero to help while the heat is about him  
 glowing and grim! For God is my witness

I am far more fain the fire should seize  
 along with my lord these limbs of mine!  
 Unsuiting it seems our shields to bear  
 homeward hence, save here we essay  
 to fell the foe and defend the life  
 of the Weders' lord. I wot 'twere shame  
 on the law of our land if alone the king  
 out of Geatish warriors woe endured  
 and sank in the struggle! My sword and helmet,  
 breastplate and board, for us both shall serve! ”\*

Thus chants Wiglaf. And it resembles to so remarkable a degree the speeches of Biarki and Hialti that some modern scholars have given voice to the belief that in it we have, possibly, the most original form of the *Biar-kamal*. They are oblivious to the fact that it was the very life of a race which found expression in these words.

There is another Anglo-Saxon poem of a similar cast, but it is historic, dealing with the fall of the ealdorman Byrhtnoth and his faithful men in a battle against an army of vikings, in the year 991.† The epic relates how Byrhtnoth falls and his followers go forward to do battle — except for two who took to flight — in order to lose their life, rather, and avenge their master:

So the son of Ælfric egged them on boldly,  
 A stripling-earlman, exhorted his fellows,  
 Ælfwine quoth, then, spake dauntlessly:  
 “Remember the times when o’er mead cups we chattered,

\* Gummere’s translation, “*The Oldest English Epic*,” line 2633 ff. — Cf. the detailed comparison with Hialti’s speech in Bugge’s article, *PBBeträge*, xii, 45 ff.

† The Battle of Maldon, Grein-Wülcker, *Bibl. der ags. poesie*, I (1883) 358–373; the translation here quoted is by J. Leslie Hall.

When, on benches lolling, we bragged lustily,  
 Heroes in hall, of the hard fought battle!  
 Who is true and trusty, we can tell soon, now,  
 My noble birth to all I will tell now,  
 Of illustrious lineage in the land of the Mercians:  
 My honored grandsire was Ealdhelm entitled,  
 A wise alderman, abundant in riches.  
 Not me in the mote shall men ever sneer at,  
 That *I* from the army ever will hasten,  
 My land looking for, now my liegelord lieth  
 Fallen in battle; 'tis the basest of evils!  
 He was not only my kinsman but also my lord."

. . . . .

Offa discoursed then,  
 His shaft shaking: "Thou, sure, Ælfwine,  
 Hast us all exhorted, earlmen fittingly:  
 Now our liegelord beloved lieth dead here."  
 Leofsunu spoke and lifted his war shield,

. . . . .

"I make thee this promise, that I hence will never  
 A foot's length flee, but further will onward,  
 Avenge in battle my dear lord and comrade.  
 Never at Sturmere may sturdy war heroes,  
 Now my friend-lord hath fallen, fling this taunt at me,  
 That my lord left I, when he lay on the battle field,  
 Went home without him: but the edge shall take me,  
 The point and the iron."

Thus the lay continues with warlike speeches and descriptions of the severity of the combat. The last one who lifts up his voice is old Byrhtwold:

Lifting his linden-shield, loud spake Byrhtwold;  
 He was an old comrade; his ashen-spear shook he,  
 The bold-mooded battle-earls he bravely exhorted:  
 "Our mind must wax braver, our mood become bolder,  
 Our spirits grow sturdier, as our force lessens.  
 Here lies our liegelord low on the battle field,  
 Good in the dust; he may grieve forever



Who thinks now of turning his face from this battle.  
 I am old and grey: *I* will not away,  
 But along by my lord will lie in the field, now,  
 In the dust dead here by so dear loved a man."

One seems to hear phrases from the Biarkamal in these passages, from the very opening stanzas of Hialti; and, to a lesser degree, farther on, until Biarki falls by the body of his king. But the same strain is heard also in Old Saxon: "An honor for the thane it is always to stand bravely by the side of one's king and die if so befall. This then we do, we follow him wherever he fares, think naught of our own life against this duty. When manfully in the host we fall with him, our (dear) lord, then fame lives on, will live on in good words among doughty men!" Curiously enough it is the apostle Thomas who speaks these words so redolent of Teutonic antiquity, in the great poem about Christ, the *Heliand*, dating from the beginning of the ninth century.\*

No doubt there resounded on every battle-field similar appeals to the housecarls; and in heroic poetry these thoughts are made use of as often and to as great an extent as the poet may require. In the epic of *Beowulf*, in Wiglaf's speech, it is only an unimportant episode; for the housecarls do not follow him, but desert him in a cowardly manner. He himself enters the combat, but without finding death at the side of his lord: his king sinks down dying by the dragon he has slain, but Wiglaf lives on after him, destined for a life full of deeds.

\* Cf. Fr. Hammerich, *De episk-kristelige oldkvad hos de gotiske folk* (1873), p. 113. *Héliand*, l. 3993.

The English poet strikes the notes of the Biarkamal, but they are not essential in his poem. Also, in the Heliand it was only a subsidiary motif; and in the case of the Battle of Maldon, only a tentative beginning is made, without the action ever condensing into a single large scene. It is only in the northern lay about the Scyldings that the loyalty of the king's men found its full expression. There, the lyrical portion forms a whole together with the corresponding epic material in which we witness how the warriors succumb together with their dying chieftain.

The oldest poetry and the oldest life of a race frequently contain many valuable thoughts, many first-beginnings of great things, but scattered widely in several directions, one motif crowding the other without any one becoming predominant. The ideal of the henchman's loyalty inspired men for centuries and was a theme for song; but it was not until toward the close of Teutonic antiquity that it received in the Biarkamal the form which in later times was considered classic and worthy of imitation, but in nowise capable of improvement.

In this poem, then, we see the ideal of devotion to one's lord carried to extreme limits. The poet sets it up against religion itself. Biarki, though aware that he is soon to be gathered to the great host of warriors in Valhalla, does not look forward to Othin as his chieftain and lord, but bids him defiance in his very death, because it is part of loyalty to his kiug. He has less regard for the god than for the men who rob the slain on the battlefield.

These highest ideals evidently have no relation to Othin in the poet's conception. They are not, for that matter, without power to enforce themselves. In this, as well as in other Northern lays, fame after death is made the supreme judge over the actions of man. Thus also in the lay of Ingiald, according to Saxo; in the songs of the skalds oblivion is the severest punishment which will be inflicted on Ingiald on account of his wretchedness. Sigurth Fafnisbani is consoled by the prophecy of his uncle Gripir that his fame will live in all eternity. In the Havamal, this thought is worded in the well-known lines,

78. Cattle die,  
and kinsmen die,  
thyself eke soon wilt die;  
but one thing, I ween,  
will wither never:  
the doom over each one dead—

in which stanza there is not contained any heathen dogma about punishment or reward in the life hereafter; as is clear from the preceding stanza:

77. Cattle die,  
and kinsmen die,  
thyself eke soon wilt die;  
but fair fame  
will fade never,  
I ween, for him who wins it.

The immortal thing is fame after death, "the doom over each one dead," "a fair fame" (*orðs-tír*), a conception which contains far more than is realized in the life in Valhalla of the *einheriar*. Belief in this fame after death becomes a supreme influence, apart from the world of the *Æsir*, but nevertheless a belief supported

by a spontaneous feeling among the people of its being true.

The poet of the Biarkamal entertains no doubts about this power of posthumous fame to deliver a correct judgment. He rages against Othin, but has regard for the man who searches the battlefield for booty; for he stands in the service of this glory after death, he will bring word of the tested devotion of those who have fallen to those who live; through him the judgment of fame is realized.

### 3. THE LATER HISTORY OF THE BIARKAMAL

The earliest mention of the existence of our poem is connected with the year 1030. Before the battle of Stiklastad, King Olaf the Saint asked his skald Thormoth to intone a song, whereupon he recited the Biarkamal. In his *Heimskringla*, Snorri describes poetically how the king in the early morning hour called upon the poet to sing, and how he then began to chant his song so that all the army awoke thereat. More simple, but none the less touching, is the account of the *Legendary Olafssaga*: before Olaf's army encountered the yeomen, he asked Thormoth to sing for him, and so Thormoth recited the Biarkamal. When the skald had concluded, the king asked what reward he desired; but Thormoth asked for nothing better than to be allowed to go before his king in battle and that it might be granted to him not to survive his lord.\* This answer is in the very spirit of the Biarkamal.

\* *Ólafssaga* (1849), p. 66; cf. *Fóstbræðrasaga*, p. 108. These older sources know nothing of the army being awakened by Thormoth's song shortly after sunrise; indeed, this seems to be Snorri's own conjecture, explaining the first verse of the Biarkamal (*dagr es upp kominn*).

In a way, the Biarkamal is connected with the battle of Stiklastad. In the memorial poem composed by the skald Sighvat on his fallen king, there is a description of the death of Biorn stallari which resembles Biarki's death by the head of King Hrolf:

*“fell í her með hollum  
hann verðungar mönnum  
(leyfðr es) at hilmis höfði  
hróðrauðigs (sá dauði).”*

“he fell in battle together with faithful followers — (glorious is) — by the head of his memorable king — (this manner of death).” Observe how the skald connects the words about this glorious manner of death not with Biorn's fall but with his place by the head of the king. And when Sighvat calls this death *leyfðr* “laudable, glorious” this word has a special significance; *at leyfa* is the technical expression of Skaldic poetry for “composing a song of praise on some one”; *leyfð* “encomium” was used by Sighvat's contemporaries in the sense of “song of praise” and by himself in the sense simply of “poem.” The correct translation would then be: “—praises have been sung to this manner of death, by the king's head.” Sighvat does not, of course, have reference to any Biorn stallari-drápa (laudatory poem) unknown to us; but he compares his king's fall with that of the greatest hero-king, immortalized in the most famous poem in the Northern tongue.\*

\* This conception of Sighvat's stanza was proposed by me in a prize essay at the University of Copenhagen, 1886, when I had the pleasure of having it adopted by that profound student of Skaldic poetry, professor Konráð Gíslason, since deceased.

What wonder, then, that Biarki seems the great prototype to the poets of the following, post-heroic period? One of these poets represented the fall of the West Norwegian sea-king Half and his warriors as a counterpart of Hrolf kraki's fall and has to an astonishing degree made use of his source. In this lay, Innstein encourages his warriors in exactly the style of Hialti; in conclusion he threatens Othin "who deprived such a king of victory"; and finally he sinks to the ground by the head of his fallen lord. Before him, Hrok has found his resting place by Half's feet; and in the last verse we hear that fame will not forget that king Half died laughing — Agnar's stout-hearted death has been transferred to the royal hero of the lay. The beginning is the most spirited portion of the lay, when the hostile king is about to burn Half and his warriors in the hall. One of the warriors awakes and exclaims: "There is smoke in the king's hall among the hawks (warriors)"; the next one says: "Methinks the wax is dripping from our swords"; only then follows Innstein's exhortation. These mingled voices surely are an imitation of the dialogue in the beginning of the Biarkamal.

The Norse lays of Starkath of the eleventh and twelfth centuries likewise contain features either borrowed or imitated. The Vikarsbalk has simply plagiarized the episode of Agnar's death in order to lend additional color to Starkath's fight with King Sisar: the strong king first strikes with his sword against Starkath's brow, whereupon the latter plunges his sword through the body of his opponent so that he falls dead. (cf. above p. 125). In more subdued fashion this epi-

sode is reëchoed in other descriptions of single combats, such as Starkath's fight with Offa in the Bravalla lay, and Starkath's fight with Geigath in the Song of Admonition.\*

It is more surprising to find the final scene of the Biarkamal again in a medieval ballad. It is in Faroese versions of the ballad of *Ulf fan Jærn* (one of the heroes of the circle of Thithrek); but it is not certain whether it is derived directly from the Biarkamal or indirectly, through the lay in the Halfssaga. The greatest interest of the verses lies in their showing how well and how harmoniously the old scene could be put into ballad form: †

“ Kongurinn gav oss gull og silvur,  
mangar ringar reyðar:  
standið nú so manniliga,  
hevnið væl hans deyða! ”

Svaraði ein af kongins monnum,  
vildi ei undan flýggja:  
“ Eg bar skonk af harra mín,  
eg skal at hans hövur ‡ liggja.”

\* Saxo, p. 279 and 388. The fragment in the Third Grammatical Treatise (*þann hefk mennskra manna fundit hringhreytanda rammastan at aflí*) which probably refers to an episode of this kind, corresponds exactly to Agnar's death (*hercule nemo illo visus mihi fortior unquam*).

† The text is printed in *Danmarks gamle folkeviser*, iv, 698–702. In the printed text of the other Faroese ballad (Hammershaimb, *Færøiske kvæder*, ii, no. 1), however, this scene does not occur, nor in the corresponding Swedish ballad (Arwidson, no. 2), for the reason that it would but ill suit there, as the ballad concludes with the warriors avenging their lord's death. But the ballad is based on the same lay that occurs in the Halfssaga and, in some older version, might have ended in the same manner; or else the old lay itself may have influenced the ballad of Ulf fan Jærn. The first line (“ the king gave us gold and silver ”) occurs in the song of Innstein and in the one version of the ballad of Ulf, but undoubtedly is original in the first.

‡ The ballad has here: *á hans brósti*; but this belongs to the last stanza.

Svaraði annar af kongins monnum:

illt er at snúgva til bóta:  
snúist tú til hilmirs hövur,  
snarast eg til fóta."

Svaraði triði af sveinunum:

"ilt er at snúgva til gavna:  
hyfli eg á min harras bróst,  
so síðla eti han ravnar."

---

"The king gave us gold and silver,  
Many rings so red:  
Stand ye now manfully  
And avenge his death!"

Answered one of the king's men,  
Would not thence fly:  
"I had gifts from my liege-lord,  
By his head I shall lie."

Answered another king's man:  
"Hard is 't to make quittance meet,  
Turnest thou to my liege's head  
Then shall I lie by his feet."

Answered the third of the warriors:  
"Hard is 't matters to mend:  
Rest shall I on my liege's breast  
So him later the ravens may rend."

---

Later literature as exemplified in this piece is a clear witness to the emphasis with which the Biarkamal impressed some of its scenes, and thereby its chief thoughts, upon the conception of later times.

But we have testimony from still earlier times. The Bravalla lay (about 1066) exhibits in its lists of warriors a memory of all kinds of heroes of ancient times. Among the chosen Norwegian heroes there is also one Biarki; likewise, one Hialti among the warlike skalds



in the Danish king's following. It is his fiery exhortations in the Biarkamal which have procured the young hero the name of a skald.\*

From the times of the battle of Stiklastad we have at least two striking agreements with our lay. During his struggle against Olaf the Saint, Erling Skialgsson exclaimed: *Qndverðir skulu ernir klóask* ("breast against breast eagles shall battle"), which looks very much like a quotation from the Biarkamal; and in the same year (1028) a skald cites another of the proverbial expressions of the lay: *várum sjón sögu slíks ríkari* (see above pages 107, 129).

We may see the traces of the song about Hrolf in older times still, even if the scenes are not as manifestly similar. The poets of the last part of the tenth century show a marked inclination to occupy themselves with the famous names of this cycle. *Hæking* (Agnar's sword that is broken on Biarki's brow) is used as a swordname by the young skald Hastein Hromundarson who fell in the battle of Svoldr (1000); but this is the only time it ever appears as such. *Laufi* is used in the same manner twice toward the end of the tenth century; once about 1020; and in all later literature only twice.† We must remember, of course, that this name of Biarki's sword is not used in the lay itself, but only in the hero legends associated with it. We shall probably be right also to associate with these sword names the story that the

\* *Brávalla lay*, verses 3 and 14 (*Arkiv*, x, 237, 246) and the (forthcoming) 3d vol. of *Danmarks Helteedigtning*.

† *Hækinga viðir*, *Landnáma* 161. *Laufa veðr*, Einar skalaglam, *Vellekla* 11 (*Aarbøger* 1891, 161); *bitran laufa Holmgöngu-Bersi*, *Kormáks saga*, c. 16; cf. *Biarnar saga hítðælakappa*, p. 37; *Heimskringla*, 676; Bjarni Kólbeinsson, *Jómsvikingadrápa* (*Fornmannasögur*, i, 169).

Icelander Mithfiarthar-Skeggi, while on a viking expedition to the Baltic (about 950) rifled Hrolf kraki's burial mound and appropriated his sword Skofnung.

The first poetic expressions in northern skaldic lays borrowed from the Scylding tradition occur but a short time before. In a poem dating anywhere from 961 to 971, Eyvind skaldaspillir calls gold "the seed of the Fyre Plains," an expression directly recalling the Biarkamal.\* But this expression soon disappears to reappear only in the Silver Age of Skaldic poetry as "Kraki's seed" or similarly. These are but figures of speech and artificialities; nevertheless we see from the various examples how the song about Hrolf and his warriors has struck root in the hearts of the peoples of the North: indeed, we can feel the lift of the wave of enthusiasm which carried the Biarkamal down to the battle of Stiklastad.

Very probably we should be able to point out still more traces of the influence of the Biarkamal if we were able to compare the exact words of the lay with Norse poems of the tenth century. Even so, dependent as we are on Saxo's free translation, we may point out its connection with one poem, Eyvind skaldaspillir's best work, the *Hákonarmál*, composed after 961, and in the same metre as the Biarkamal. One sentence found in both especially testifies to a connection between the two poems: "the sword cleft the byrnie as though brandished in water" (cf. p. 131). Furthermore, there are similar descriptions of the fierce fighting at the beginning of the battle; the mention of the king's helmet is

\* *Fýrisvalla frá* (*Heimskr., Haralds saga gráfelds*, c. 1). Just as in the Biarkamal the thought refers to Frothi's golden quern-seed; *Fróða fáglyjaðra þýja meldr*, in the next half of the stanza.

common to both; perhaps we may also point out the casting away of one's armor in the battle. A direct proof of Eyvind's having made use of the Biarkamal cannot be furnished, to be sure, with the material at hand; but seeing the strong influence of the Scylding tradition and of the Biarkamal itself, probably, on Eyvind's other poems, it must be conceded that everything points in that direction. His special ability in imitating in an ingenious manner some older poem in the metre he happens to be using is well known; thus his *Háleygiatal* is an imitation of the *Ynglingatal*, Thjotholf's genealogical poem; and the last portion of the *Hakonarmal* borrows its motif from its antecedent, the poem about Eric Bloody-axe, and finally incorporates an entire half-stanza from the *Havamal*. The style of the first half of the *Hakonarmal* either is his own — in which case it stands alone among his works — or it is imitated from the Biarkamal in such fashion that he has made his own the characteristic note of this lay, its heavy din of arms and its strange mixture of rejoicing in battle and the silent gloom of death.

All these suggestions and traces of the poetic form of the Biarkamal are interesting to us in two ways. On the one hand they point to its later history, demonstrating thereby how deeply the lay impressed itself on the consciousness of that whole period and thus explaining the fact — which we shall illustrate more in detail, later on — that the song blotted out the memory of the older Scylding traditions and itself became a fresh point of departure for a new type of poetry. On the other, they hark back to a still more remote past,

serving thus as points which, step by step, lead back to the origin of the Biarkamal itself. By rather abundant suggestions we have been able to go back as far as about 960; then we suddenly are brought to a halt. Shortly before that time, then, the lay must have been composed, if by a northern skald; a little earlier, if composed elsewhere.

We shall have opportunity later to compare the date thus arrived at with the conclusion to be drawn from a study of the poetic form of the Biarkamal.

#### 4. THE HOME OF THE BIARKAMAL

All we have found out concerning the Biarkamal, so far, mainly refers to time. We began by determining its place among kindred legends, and saw that it continues the old tradition, the fairly historic commemoration of a Danish king who lived in the sixth century. The lay itself — as will be presently shown — forms the basis of the medieval accounts of Hrolf and his warriors, both in Denmark and in Iceland. Sociologically, the lay was seen to embody the last splendidly developed celebration of the Teutonic sense of loyalty; from the point of view of Teutonic religion it is characteristic of the period when the faith in the gods was shaken but had not yet broken down. Finally, we have searched through Old-Norse literature — the only literature furnishing sufficient source material — to detect all echoes and reflections in order to trace the later history of the lay. But the nearer we approach, not this or that vestige of the lay, but the poetic spirit itself in which it was conceived, the more pressingly the other question will

confront us: where did this remarkable poem of antiquity come into existence?

The problem is difficult and complex, in so far as we have at our disposal only a translation of the lay, in addition to small fragments and inaccurate echoes. It will be necessary to ask the sources only what they really can answer.

The lay depended on oral tradition for a long time, partly in Danish territory, partly in Norway and Iceland. In the form in which the existing texts were committed to writing (about 1200), the variations are quite considerable. An investigation as to the original home of the poem must be based first, on all the stanzas and motifs common to both traditions; secondly, on those verses and motifs which occur in one tradition only, but on account of their place in the composition, for some reason or other, have a claim to be considered original. We have seen that Saxo's text forms a whole of powerful dramatic effectiveness (as the stanzas common to both traditions do not; cf. below, numbers 5 and 6). Moreover, the stanzas peculiar to Saxo stand quite on the same level as the stanzas common to both versions, both as regards their closeness to the oldest traditions, and their general resemblance to "Eddic poetry." The Icelandic tradition will be dealt with in detail in the next chapter.

Regarding the poem as a whole and glancing over its scenes, from one end to the other, from Leire castle to the islet where Biarki had been born, it seems Danish and nothing else. There is not the least attempt here to apportion Hrolf's warriors among all the Scandinavian

countries and to appropriate for one's own country the very bravest of them, as in the Icelandic and Norwegian sources. Of the images taken from nature, the stag is precisely the animal characteristic of the Danish forests. The surging and hurrying river — in case this figure really stood in the text of our lay — is no more a stranger in Danish lands than so many a "swift stream" and "green bank" in the ballads; for that matter, not only the inhabitants of Scania but also men of many a Danish coast with high bluffs knew of rivers torrential in spring. Of these images the one of the stag occurs in several poems of the Edda which are, most probably, of Norwegian origin, by way of simile for the hero-king who has fallen; but since the stag is not a Norwegian animal, the image must be borrowed from elsewhere, from a people inhabiting the plains.\* It is well to remember that these figures are not so much an expression of the poet's own conception of nature as a result of tradition in poetic style. To be sure, the same might be the case with the simile in the *Biarkamal*; but as the stag is used as a symbol of celerity and is associated with the rapid river it is no doubt original and native: the lay is really composed in a land where the stag abounds in the forest.

A more definite criterion is derived from poetic ideas from an entirely different region: Othin's ride over the battlefield in order to fetch along those who have fallen. This scene is at variance with what is accepted among the Norse skalds, who always conceive of Othin as enthroned in Valhalla and receiving the fallen; and in an-

\* Cf. Bugge, *Helgedigtene*, p. 114 (English ed., 118).

other connection we pointed out that the conception of Othin as expressed in the *Biarkamal* must be part of an older and more original belief. The poet did not belong to the same group as the Norn skalds of the tenth century. Either his native country is far from theirs, or he is of a widely differing period, far removed from that of most skaldic lays and the poems of the Edda. The latter alternative is in nowise probable; for it is not likely that a heroic lay should come down to us which is older than all skaldic poetry. Moreover, it is to be remembered that these conceptions of Othin are confined not only to the skalds. All through Norn literature, Othin's ride over the battlefield plays no rôle in his relation to men; he sits in Valhalla to receive the fallen, or he comes *on foot* in order to take part in the action; thus also in the Faroese ballads; and in modern Norwegian folklore "Our Lord" walks about on earth with wolves as his dogs. In Denmark and Sweden, on the contrary, Othin is conceived as riding; witness the pictorial representations from the Viking Period or still older times, as also the strongly developed popular belief, current throughout southern Scandinavia, about "Oden" or "Un" riding about in the night, mixed at times with conceptions of him as the god of death. The only exception from this general fact is the story known from Nes in southern Norway of the smith who shod Othin's horse when the god journeyed to the battle at Lena in 1208. In the southernmost tip of Norway, then, we find the conception of Othin personally journeying to be present at a battle. But precisely this theme of the riding Othin who has his horse shod in a smithy

by night recurs in the Danish belief about the nightly huntsman and may be traced in the same function down into southern Germany. This piece of local superstition occurring in Nes did not leave any traces in the Norn mythology of the skalds and of the heroic lays, being, in fact, only a solitary offshoot from the popular belief of a more southern country. The case is that of a great deal of the modern folklore in the southernmost tip of Norway which resembles Danish lore to a remarkable degree.\* The scene in the Biarkamal in which Othin is described as riding over the battlefield is, accordingly, not from Norn mythology, but wholly Danish.

Finally, there is the folkloristic side of the Biarkamal problem. Traces of the lay are found scattered over Denmark, Norway, the Faroe Islands, and Iceland; either it originated in Denmark, spreading thence over Norse territory; or else it originated in Norse territory and was introduced into Denmark. The unlikelihood of the latter hypothesis will be clear to every one. It would mean that Denmark first sent its old heroic lays and traditions to Norway and its colonies; that there they were transformed into the Biarkamal, and that this lay should suit the Danes so well that it was not only adopted by them but crowded out the memory of their own old lays. How much more natural the supposition that the Danes themselves sang about their ancient traditions and that the most excellent of their lays was brought to their kinsmen in the North!

\* Cf. Storaker og Fugletvedt, *Folkesagn samlede i Lister og Mandals amt*, i (1881).



Indeed, what might be the reason for Norwegians making use of this material? Compare it, for example with the Norse lays about Starkath in all of which Norwegian national feeling finds expression, as, e.g., the Bravalla lay, exhibiting it strongly as do also the saga-composition about Eric the Wise-spoken\* and the later Icelandic accounts of Bǫthvar biarki. Neither is there in them any poetic interest in the main personage (Hrolf). This will be evident when comparing the Biarkamal with the later traditions about Bǫthvar; whereas in our lay Biarki is characterized only by his relation to his king. It is chiefly a celebration of the hero-king among the Scyldings and of his follower's devotion to him. It stands to reason that the king thus immortalized by the poet is not any stranger king, but the hero of his own people and of their royal race.

There is still another point. The Biarkamal contains, as we have seen — and to a much greater degree than was formerly suspected — references to the older historic traditions. We have good reason to fix its time and scene as being as close to the old Scyldings as its poetical nature and the general literary situation will permit. And on the other hand, starting from the Biarkamal, it will be seen that the Danish tradition of the Scylding legends groups itself closely about our lay, throwing light on it and supplementing it; whereas the Norn tradition diverges ever more widely, never becoming associated with the Leire castle of the Biarkamal in the same fashion as does the Danish tradition.

\* *Eiríkr hinn málspaki* (Saxo's 5th book, *DH*, ii, § 42).

## 5. THE ICELANDIC TEXT OF THE BIARKAMAL

The Biarkamal has been handed down to us only in the three imperfect versions preserved by Saxo, the *Hrólfs saga kraka*, and the few fragments in Snorri's *Heimskringla* and *Edda*.<sup>\*</sup> So far, no one has attempted a thorough and exhaustive comparison of these three sources.<sup>†</sup>

<sup>\*</sup> Text and translation of the fragments preserved by Snorri, here given according to Finnur Jónsson, *Den Norsk-Islandske Skjaldedigtning*, 1908, ii, 170:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <p>1. Dagr's upp kominn,<br/>dynja hana fjaðrar,<br/>mál's vílmögum<br/>at vinna erfiði;<br/>vaki ok æ vaki<br/>vina hofuð,<br/>allir enir æztu<br/>Aðils of sinnar.</p>                  | <p>1. The day has come,<br/>the cock's wings sound,<br/>it is time for thralls<br/>to go to their task;<br/>Awake, ye friends,<br/>be aye awake,<br/>all ye best men<br/>of Athils' (board).</p>       |
| <p>2. Hár enn harðgreipi,<br/>Hrólfur skjótandi,<br/>ættumgóðir menn,<br/>þeir ekki flœja;<br/>vekka yðr at víni<br/>né at vífs rúnum,<br/>heldr vekk yðr at hofðum<br/>Hildar leiki.</p> | <p>2. Har the hardgripping,<br/>Hrolf the Bowman,<br/>men of noble race<br/>who never flee; —<br/>I wake you not to wine<br/>nor to women's converse,<br/>but rather to the hard<br/>game of Hild.</p> |
| <p>3. Hniginn's í hadd jarðar<br/>Hrólfur enn stórláti.</p>   | <p>3. Hrolf the generous<br/>has sunk to the ground.</p>   |
| <p>4, 5, 6: for the gold stanzas see p. 192,</p>  |  |
| <p>7. (Probably from some later Biarkamal:</p>  |  |
| <p>Svá skalk hann kyrkja<br/>sem enn kámleita<br/>véli viðbjarnar<br/>veggja aldinna.)</p>  | <p>(I shall smother him like the<br/>black-snouted cat . . .)</p>  |

<sup>†</sup> In recent times, F. Jónsson (*Oldn. lit. hist.*, i, 471) and Detter (*Arkiv*, xiii, 366, cf. xv, 267) have attempted to determine the origin of the verses cited by Snorri: but their material is too scanty (the only complete source being left out of consideration). Hence their observations lead to no lasting results.

The fragments are easiest to recognize in the prose version preserved in the Icelandic saga. Here the names of the warriors are found; not only of the two who form the conclusion of Snorri's second verse, but the whole list. Here we find again the exhortation to fight now, and not to embrace women. Here we find, in the final scene, Biarki's threat that, if he could lay hands on Othin, he would "crush him like a mouse." The first verse is paralleled less closely by the words, "Awake, sir king, there is tumult in the castle"; but this does not prove that the saga lacked the first stanza, since it treats the introductory verses in a very free manner.\* The many kennings for gold are not found, either; but then, it would hardly have been possible to incorporate them in a story told in the manner of the saga. A definite difference is to be seen only in this, that we find no correspondence whatever for the two lines: "Hrolf has sunk on earth's locks (the grass)"; moreover, the rendering of the saga knows nothing of the dialogue concerning Hrolf's fame after death, which fact is due to the saga's characteristic description of the battle (cf. below).

The relation between Saxo and the Icelandic fragments of the lay is an entirely different one. Of the eleven and one-half half-stanzas extant, only one may be recognized with certainty ("I wake you not to wine nor to women's converse"). Possibly, the preceding line "awake, be aye awake" is reflected in Saxo's first line (*Ocius evigilet*, etc.), but if so, the form is very dif-

\* The line containing *vífs rúnnum* occurs twice in the saga. The names of the warriors are mentioned, not in the exhortation to fight, but in the description of how these warriors arose to fight.

ferent. The names of the warriors are not found in Saxo's rendition; but it is altogether unlikely that he would have failed to mention such famous heroes of antiquity had he known of them. Biarki's threat against Othin has an altogether different form ("he would not escape unharmed from Leire"); the half-stanza containing his threat to squeeze him as the cat squeezes a mouse is altogether lacking. Finally, there is in Saxo's text a long commemorative passage, but no sentence remotely like the one that "Hrolf has sunk on earth's locks." Also the stanzas about the gold are lacking in his version, although it would scarcely have been too difficult a task for Saxo to find a poetic form to suggest their contents.

In brief, Saxo's Biarkamal is very unlike either of the Icelandic monuments. We shall now have to examine the Icelandic sources in order to determine what is the nature of this difference and what is its origin.

In the version of the saga we find a large number of the verses known from Saxo, but by no means all. Hialti's introductory verses are almost all there; his exhortation, the summoning to Hild's play, Skuld's treason, the advance of the army, the exhortation to requite Hrolf for his gifts and to follow the king (here put in Biarki's mouth!), the description of the fierce battle, and finally the second calling of Biarki with the threat to burn him in the hall. On the other hand, the dramatic interruptions in Hialti's long speech are lacking; that is, both the stanza in which Biarki calls to his slave, and Hialti's words addressed to Hrut. Following the threat of burning Biarki in the hall, nothing

is said about all that which forms the main portion in Saxo's Biarkamal: the words in praise of Hrolf, together with the retrospect of his king's life, the slaughter about him, his words of revenge, and Hialti's third call to Biarki. Finally we recognize almost in its entirety what in Saxo is the third chief division of the lay, the portion devoted to Biarki; lacking are only the more dramatic scene in which Hrut addresses Biarki, and the very end of the lay with the mention of the warriors sinking to the ground by Hrolf's head.

It will thus be seen that some of the best and most characteristic portions of the lay are lacking. To offset these deficiencies, the saga represents but a few stanzas which are unknown to Saxo: the list of warriors at the beginning of the lay, and one verse about Biarki having fought in twelve battles. Otherwise, one will search in vain for a single speech which might render the original verses.\* The account furnished by the Icelandic saga

\* In the following I shall furnish a brief survey of the portions of dialogue which do not occur in the Biarkamal as rendered by Saxo:

I. Dialogue with persons who do not appear in the Biarkamal: (1) p. 101, Hrolf's urging his men to be glad and to drink (probably a free rendition of the motif in Hialti's genuine remark, stanza 8, at *Hrólfr konungr drekki nú hit stóðarsta sinn með koppum sinum*); (2) Skuld's astonishment at this indifference to death; (3) p. 103, Hialti's question why Bøthvar biarki is not at the side of his lord, and Hrolf's answer that he is there where he may serve his master best, allusion to Biarki's bearish nature which plays so great a rôle in Icelandic prose tradition. It needs no proof that these speeches belong to the saga writer and not to the lay; it was not in the nature of the old song to abandon its form by thus introducing the historical chief personages for the sake of such short remarks. Also, their contents are so obvious that we do not in the least need to assume the loss of some verses in order to explain their presence.

II. Dialogues between the usual persons of the Biarkamal: (1) p. 100, Hialti's remark that great omens have gone before the battle; (2) p. 104, Bøthvar in a lengthy speech complains that they have to fight against sorcery and that Hialti has not done his king any great service by calling him

does not, then, adduce any new poetic features, and fails to render many of the known stanzas. This lack is not to be explained by assuming that the saga writer knew these stanzas but tells nothing about them; the saga has no information concerning Hrolf's sister Hrut (putting in her place Hrolf's daughter Driva), nor concerning Hrolf's fight with Hroerik, etc. The saga loses rank as source also because it interpolates long narrative portions and freely changes the sequence of the stanzas. On page 104 there is the account of Biarki's victory over Agnar, but on page 107 there is another, more detailed account of the same fight which is wrongly conceived as part of the battle at Leire.\*

The almost certain objection to this depreciation of the saga account will be that this source contains an essential and highly interesting trait for the understanding of the nature of Biarki. We remember that the saga

out to battle (i.e., by getting the bear to disappear); also Hialti's short reply to this; (3) p. 105, Bøthvar exclaims against the slain rising again to fight with him; (4) p. 106, he mentions among his great deeds that he has fought in twelve battles and that it was he who egged the king on to undertake the expedition to visit Athisl; (5) p. 107, the dialogue closes with Hialti's words that it does not avail to fight against fate. Of all these remarks only Bøthvar's *tólf folkorrustur* contains any real information; the other three speeches agree with the saga and were probably suggested by it. As to the long description: *grunar mik nú at þeir dauðu sveimi hér . . . ok margr hofðingi sundr bolaðr*, it has probably no other basis than stanza 27 (about the fall of the chieftains). Going over these speeches, one observes that they contain just those motives which are characteristic of Icelandic "fornaldarsaga style"; that the most prominent one among them (Bøthvar's complaint about having been awakened) forms the continuation of Hialti's dialogue with Hrolf (which was not in the lay); and that Hialti's short remarks always serve to end the more lengthy dialogues and contain but little that is noteworthy.

\* The relation here is the same as in the free treatment of the Bravalla Lay's list of warriors in *Sögubrot* (i.e., *Skiöldunga saga*), over against Saxo's exact rendering where — witness the alliteration and the geographic connection — the original order is preserved.

relates that it was only Bǫðvar biarki's body which lay in the hall, deaf to all summons — his soul meanwhile was abroad in the shape of a bear, and the enemies were powerless against Hrolf's army while the bear was present; it is only when Hialti had driven Biarki out to do battle and the bear disappeared that Skuld's army won the upper hand and Hrolf's warriors succumbed.

But, however interesting and dramatic this *motif*, it is, first of all, quite incompatible with Saxo's full and well composed redaction. Even in the Icelandic text it does not produce a very favorable impression. According to that account, Hrolf is still alive in the last portion of the lay, which deals chiefly with Biarki; but in the poem itself not a word is said about whether he is the leader of the army or himself fights, or is being protected by his devoted men. Also the scene in which Biarki threatens Othin is made to take place while the battle is raging and Hrolf still is among the fighting; but how much more natural to let this scene be the grand conclusion of the battle! The lay itself mentions how heavy Biarki's sword blows fall when he finally plunges into the battle. One has in nowise the impression that the resistance of Hrolf's warriors becomes weaker at that moment.

Neither is there any trace in the lay of anything pertaining to Biarki's bear nature. In the saga we find a passage of dialogue between Hrolf and Hialti as to why the strongest warrior is absent from the battle; but this cannot have stood in the lay, because it would have been the height of prosiness to introduce the main personage only to have him make an explanatory remark, such as

is put into the mouth of Biarki as conclusion to his first long speech; but nothing characterizes it as being derived from the lay, and by itself it would not suffice to express the thought (cf. p. 186, note). All these veiled suggestions of Biarki's bear nature are, however, precisely characteristic of Icelandic saga style.

If the lay had the form implied in the account of the saga, it would end before the fall of Hrolf himself. This is so serious a mistake that it can by no manner of means lie in the original thought of the poem. The poetically excellent conclusion is found in Saxo's text, where the warriors fall by the body of their king; and that the same conclusion was used in Norse tradition is made evident by Sighvat's allusion at the battle of Stiklastad and also by the lay in the *Halfssaga*. But if this is the case, there is no possibility of witnessing Hrolf's fall; for the entire Biarki portion is closely knit both in Danish and Icelandic tradition. To introduce the bear motive into it would only produce confusion and lack of unity. All this constitutes one more proof that Biarki's bear nature is not original, in fact, was probably not even part of the lay in the form known in Iceland, but belonged only to the prose narrative.

The lay as handed down by the Icelandic sources is a *Biarkamal* which in no respect has a fuller action than Saxo's, but is, rather, in various respects more meagre. The lively and dramatically effective details are omitted; there is lacking the grand picture, born of a despairing enthusiasm, of Hrolf and his warriors' life; even the solemn conclusion is there no longer. Only the stanzas with warlike contents occur abundantly. The Icelandic



Biarkamal is a collection of fragments. It reminds one of a musical composition heard at a great distance: the ear is not able to catch the finer shades and the subdued notes; all that world of harmonies which revealed a picture of the times and a conception of life in all its details is lost in the distance; a sound of trumpets blaring and of sword blows is all that is heard, from first to last.

It may occur to one that the reason for the Biarkamal being thus poorly handed down is this new theme, the thought that Bǫðvar biarki took part in the battle in the guise of a bear; as it was, indeed, evident how this theme disturbed the sequence of the scenes and interfered with the passages in commemoration of Hrolf. At the same time I believe that this came about in a different manner. I prefer to seek the reason in the method of handing down the lay, rather than in any intruding *motif*. We know that the Biarkamal was sung when the army of Olaf the Saint advanced to Stiklastath. This was probably not the only time it was chanted; few lays are so well suited for a battle song. Now the use of a poem for such a distinct purpose will exert some influence on the handing down of it: just such stanzas will be picked out in which there is exhortation and battle; no use will be made of the softer notes. It is the practical use of it which destroyed the lay finally.

On the ruins of the decaying poem there grew up a new poetic theme, Biarki's bear nature, but in saga form. In this fashion the Icelandic account of Hrolf's fall becomes but another example of the rotation of

form often seen in the Middle Ages: the lay crumbles to pieces and in its stead there rises up a prose narrative with new and vigorous shoots.

It is possible to get some idea of the nature of the Icelandic tradition of the Biarkamal at an earlier time than when the Hrolfssaga was written. The Skioldungasaga, as accessible through Arngrim Jónsson's abstract, begins by telling that "Hrolf and his men heroically seized their arms, hewed down the enemy, and drove them out of the gate," but that they afterwards, in some way or other, reëntered the castle. This somewhat vague account evidently goes back to some poetic source, probably to the same stanza about the struggle in the gate (stanza 10) which we know from Saxo (and the saga). In the Skioldungasaga we find also the supernatural occurrences recounted in the Hrolfssaga, viz., Othin himself fighting in the army of the enemies, and the fallen being charmed back to life. On the other hand it lacks the final scene by Hrolf's body, nor is Hrolf's sister Hrut mentioned. In her stead, Hrolf's two daughters, Skur and Driva, marry the heroes Biarki and Hvitserk. Accordingly, we see already in the Skioldungasaga, which was written as early as (about) 1200 and shows an unusually full knowledge of the Icelandic Scylding traditions, that the Biarkamal even then existed in a corrupted form. This may also give us a hint in what condition Snorri may have known the lay.

We shall now return to the fragments of the lay preserved in Icelandic texts of the thirteenth century, in order to receive also their contribution to the history of our lay.

## 192 THE HEROIC LEGENDS OF DENMARK

As shown above, only one of the stanzas incontestably belongs to the original text of the Biarkamal common both to Danish and Icelandic. We shall now determine their value by internal evidence.

The largest connected group of stanzas is the one containing the kennings for gold:

Gramr enn giöflasti  
goeddi hirð sína  
Feniu forverki,  
Fáfnis miðgarði,  
Glasir glóbarri,  
Grana fagrbyrði,  
Draupnis dýrsveita,  
dúni Grafvitnis.

Ytti orr hilmir,  
aldir við tóku,  
Sifjar svarðfestum,  
svelli dalnauðar,  
tregum Otrsgjöldum,  
tárum Mardallar,  
eldi Órunar,  
Iðja glysmólum.

Gladdi gunnveitir,  
gengom fagrbúnir,  
þíaza þingskilum,  
þjóðir hermargar,  
Rínar rauðmalmi,  
rógi Niflunga,  
vísi inn vígdiarfi,  
varði hann Baldr þeygi!

The generous king  
gladdened his warriors  
with Fenja's toil  
with Fafnir's land,  
Glasir's gleam-leaves  
and Grani's fair burden,  
with Draupnir's dear drops  
and the down of Grafvitnir.

Lavished the leader,  
and his liege-men took:  
Sif's head-dress,  
the bow-bender's ice,  
Otr's dire weregild,  
Mardall's tears,  
the river's fire-gleam,  
and Ithi's shining speech.

The battle-giver pleased —  
bright was our raiment —  
the thick hosts of warriors  
with Thiazi's hoard,  
with the Rhine's red ore,  
the betrayer of the Niflungs, —  
(did) the war-loving king;  
yet waked he not strife.

Upon examining the nature of these three stanzas in comparison with the Biarkamal as known from other sources, and as to whether they are composed by the same poet who originally gave form to the battle scenes

of our lay, we shall at once become aware of a thorough going difference. The poet of the Biarkamal has an inexhaustible abundance; his thought never stagnates, new images present themselves to him, dramatic scenes interrupt the more lyrical portions, and in the latter he shows a singular ability to see a matter from ever new sides. But these Icelandic stanzas, which shine with such a pomp of words and borrow figures from all possible myths about gold, are miserably poor in thoughts and new notes; the same clinking of gold sounds through more than twenty lines. They cannot be the work of the poet of the Biarkamal but must be, rather, the effort of some bungling versifier. They show precisely the defects of Old Norse skaldic poetry — its fondness for a figurative mode of speech which is not given opportunity to form a figure but results only in a kind of linguistic gymnastics, because no sooner has the poet said two words but he is hunting for some new figure which has nothing to do with the preceding one.

In view of the very clear internal evidence it is hardly necessary to point out other proofs. The list contained in the above lines can by no manner of means be attributed to the time and place in which the Biarkamal originated, viz., in Denmark, while heathendom yet persisted. They are a veritable catalog of the skalds' kennings for gold and thus presuppose the entire evolution of their language-technique, in fact show it at an advanced stage.

If one should wish to determine the age of these three stanzas by internal evidence alone it is, to start with, an obvious conclusion that they are of a very late date.

Enumerations of kennings such as these are characteristic of the Skaldic art of the twelfth century. Of the expressions here used a large number is unknown to Skaldic poetry during its classic times. *Fenia* is not found in kennings for gold before Einar Skulason and the poets of the thirteenth century; *Grafvitnir*, to designate serpents in general, occurs only in Einar Skulason and in the Krakumál; "Grani's burden," only in Thorvald Blonduskald; \* the kenning *Iðja orð* or *gald* is unknown before the thirteenth century; likewise *þiazi*, in similar connections. "Glasi's leaves" and "Sif's hair" are not known as kennings elsewhere, whereas *miðgarðr* nowhere else has come to mean simply "land." To judge from this evidence, the stanzas date from the middle of the twelfth century or still later. They remind one of nothing so much as of Einar Skulason's verses about the axe presented to him by the king, both by the similarity in details (*Feniu melder*, *Grafvitnis beðr*, *Mardallar grátr*) and by their constant repetition of the same thought by means of new clusters of kennings for gold and precious things.† Hence, it is not unlikely that these verses in the Icelandic Biarkamál were composed by Einar Skulason himself or some skald of his school.

Taking a general view of the stanzas which cannot belong to the original text of the Biarkamál we shall

\* Cf. *hliðfarmr Grana*, *Oddrúnagrátr*, 21, for the gold of the Niflungs. Cf. the kennings for the Niflung gold in *Atlakviða*, 27, and *Sigurarkviða*, iii, 16, which positively look like the prototypes for the stanzas in the Biarkamál.

† Cf. F. Jónsson's characterization of this poem: "The stanzas are extremely monotonous and the contents restrict themselves to: the king gave me an axe, adorned with gold and silver, and ornaments." (*Oldn. lit. hist.*, ii, 70.)

recognize a characteristic common to almost all of them: as compared with the technique of the heroic lays in general they show an unusually frequent use of poetic figures. In addition to the fifteen kennings in the above stanzas about the gold, there is the figure of "earth's locks" for the grass, besides a long and complicated circumlocution, because the poet considers it below his dignity to name a mouse by its proper name. How very different from this is the simple figure in the certainly genuine stanza where battle is called "Hild's play." This corresponds exactly to the condition of the lay as shown above: The old Biarkamal has been broken up and partly forgotten; so some Icelandic skald tried to remedy the defect by adding stanzas and lines where he thought they were lacking.

Examining the fragments as to their metrical scheme one will see that nine half-stanzas are explained without difficulty as following the rules for the Icelandic *mála-háttir*; but three lines make an exception:

(1) *heldr vekk yðr at hqrðum / Hildar leiki.*

(2) *vaki æ ok vaki / vina hqfuð.*

(3) *ættumgóðir menn / þeirs ekki flýja.*

One of the recent editors of the Icelandic Biarkamal \* has tried his best to reduce these lines to the normal scheme. It is easiest to emend (3) to read *menn ættum-góðir*. The other two lines are more difficult. The whole matter is seen in a somewhat different light when it is remembered that it is precisely the nine half-stanzas known only in Iceland which conform to the

\* Wisén, *Carmina Norræna*, p. 1. The reading of the MSS. is kept by Heusler and Ranisch, *Eddica Minora*, p. 31, and F. Jónsson, *Den Norsk-islandske Skjaldedigtning* (1912), i, 170.

Icelandic rules; whereas the two half-stanzas which were chanted in Denmark also present the above difficulties.

One more noteworthy feature in one of these half-stanzas must be dwelt on. There is one passage where a knowledge derived from Icelandic sources alone is not sufficient to explain the text. *Aðils of sinnar* can from an Icelandic point of view mean only "King Athils' followers"; but as the connection shows, it is the Danish and not the Swedish king's men who are thus addressed. Bugge's explanation that Hrolf's twelve berserkers are meant, who in the battle on the ice of lake Vener had fought in Athils' army is probably correct in reproducing the interpretation the old Icelanders gave to the expression; but it is not satisfactory for the lay itself. One would, rather, expect an exhortation addressed to all of Hrolf's followers to fight; and even if only this select band of twelve is addressed, this designation would seem very strange in the first stanza, before any other name has been mentioned in the lay.\* Here, of all places, one would expect a plain designation such as, "Hrolf's men" or "the king's men." Another explanation has been given by N. M. Petersen which undoubtedly is correct in the main — he explains *aðils of sinnar* as "the atheling's followers" — even if the form of the word will always remain uncertain.† Never-

\* Cf. Bugge, *PBB*, xii, 13; cf. below, c. 31 about the battle on lake Vener. From the point of view of the tradition it would suit better to understand *Aðils sinnar* as "those who had participated in the expedition against Athils" (cf. *at sinna með e-m*, "to journey to some one"), since the Biarkamal otherwise mentions only hostilities against Athils.

† A noun *aðill* "atheling" probably represents an adjective "noble" (Ags. *aðele*) used substantively; cf. Old N. *aðili* "chief defendant."

theless, the explanation probably lies in the original reading being the Old Danish *aðalsinnar* "followers of the right kind" or "excellent followers" (similar to the *aðalmerki* of the Rune Stones, cf. Wimmer, *Danske Runemindesmærker*, II, 475) as Vilh. Andersen conjectured.\* The present author added the remark that the designation for Hrolf would then certainly lie in the adjective. That is, *allir hins æzta aðalsinnar* would have to be rendered: "All the right followers of the most excellent." It seems altogether improbable that Hrolf himself should not be mentioned at all in these stanzas, and especially that the word of praise should not be attached to him but to his followers, which would be contrary to the spirit of the lay. The expression "right followers of the most excellent king" exactly fits the Biarkamal's conception of the relation between king and kingsmen. But the interesting point for us is not the most correct reading, but the fact that the language of the Icelandic skalds can not by its own means explain the line in a natural way. In three particulars, then, we have seen differences in these fragments of the Biarkamal: in the kennings, in the metre, and in the vocabulary. They have served to draw the division line still deeper between those stanzas of the lay which were known in Iceland only and those which have parallels in Denmark. We have learned to differentiate ever more clearly between the original text of the lay and the new version of some Icelandic skald. Whether this skald flourished about Einar Skulason's time (about 1150) or about the time of the battle of Stiklastad (1030) is less

\* *Danske Studier*, 1905, p. 170.



important for our purposes; though both literary reasons and arguments based on the tradition would indicate that he belonged rather to the later date.

There is still another stanza or, rather, one and a half, in which most scholars are inclined to see remainders of an old tradition preserved only in Iceland. It is the list of Hrolf's warriors. But a question becomes necessary here. Scarcely any feature is so closely associated with Hrolf's name in the general consciousness as this circle of twelve chosen warriors. Still, when we go back to the sources this matter becomes more doubtful. The Icelandic monuments, to be sure, have much to tell about the lives of these berserkers; but no Danish source says anything whatsoever about such a body. Now, is it likely that Danish lore should altogether forget about such a tradition, in case it had been widespread at one time? Let us peruse the Biarkamal once more and see how the twelve warriors would fit its economy. It mentions housecarls and followers, the king's sworn men, who have received his gifts; but nothing is said about a selected band among this large host.\* The lay treats of Biarki and Hialti; nothing is seen of any larger circle of persons who, if they existed, would certainly have to appear now and then as the special bodyguard of the king. Comparing the Biarkamal with the lay which is most closely related, the lay of

\* Saxo uses the expressions *proceres* (five times; this is the usual designation for followers in his poems), *amici*, *regis amici* (five times, cf. *vina hqfuð* in the fragment), *socii*, *satelles*; once the king's men are designated as *illustres proceres* = *magnates*, *potentes*, *clarissima stemmata* (cf. *mart manna ríkra ok tíginnna*, Hrolfssaga); that is to say, those of highest position among the followers; but there is nothing to indicate that they constitute any special troop.

Innstein, we appreciate at once the significance of its negative testimony; for in this lay now one and now the other of Half's warriors, or else now half, now all of the twelve champions are named. The same is to be observed in the old Chanson de Roland about the twelve paladins. But the Biarkamal is indifferent to all of Hrolf's champions except these two. There is but one possible explanation: the circle of twelve warriors did not exist at the time when the Biarkamal was first composed, and it never did exist in Danish tradition, but was added only in the Norn account. As such it is the most noteworthy Norn contribution to the story of Hrolf kraki.

One more stanza is to be mentioned the contents of which are outlined in the saga but find no counterpart in Saxo. Biarki says: *ek hefi barizt í tólf folkorrustum*. Of course, this stanza might originally have belonged to the poem and have accidentally disappeared in the Danish tradition. However, throughout Eddic poetry one will scarcely find a similar enumeration of a hero's exploits. On the other hand analogies may be found in the later skaldic poetry: *hefk fimm tygum sinna folkorrostur fram þar . . .* (Krákumál 28), *orrostur hefk áttar þærs ágætar þóttu . . . fimm tygi ok eina* (Ragnar's Death-song, Fas., i, 282). This stanza, as well as the others of Icelandic tradition, shows all the earmarks of having been added later.

#### 6. NAME, STRUCTURE, AND STYLE OF THE BIARKAMAL

What was the old Danish name of the lay which we have been calling Biarkamal? This question seems unnecessary; still, the matter is not simple.

Among the Icelanders it bore the name of *Biarkamál*\* (Biarki-speeches) or "the old Biarkamal." But there

\* The same name lives on in modern Norwegian dialects where it designates antique, especially poetical diction (Landstad, *Norske-folkviser*, 785; Aasen, *Ordbog*<sup>2</sup> 58; Ross, *Ordbog*, 46; "*tungemålet skulle vera utstokke beinavages*

is also another name, used more rarely, *Húskaflahvot* (exhortation of the housecarls). This double name the Icelanders explain by the hypothesis that Huskaflahvot was the name given to the lay by Olaf or his men on the day of the battle of Stiklastad.\*

It was natural enough for the Icelanders to think of its use at Stiklastad, when calling the poem Huskaflahvot. But the two things do not necessarily go together. Even if Thormoth never had recited the song for King Olaf's army, it still would be a *húskaflahvot*, an exhortation of the housecarls, especially the beginning of the song with its call to Hrolf's men to seize their arms and fight manfully.

The designation *húskaflar* points rather to Denmark. In Norway, during the Middle Ages, the word was used generally to designate the lowest rank among the king's servants, viz., the workmen in the palace; especially the yeomen's or "landed men's" housecarls are spoken of in contrast to the king's or the earls' *hirð* or *handgengnir menn*; only exceptionally is it used for all the king's henchmen.† Still, in the times of Olaf the Saint, the terms *húskaflar* and *hirðmenn* were used interchangeably, as seen in Sighvat's poems.‡ Both are unknown in the earlier Skaldic poetry. For Danish territory exactly

*or det gamle Bjorkemålet, som ei ti var tala i Sætesdal og i heile Noregs land,"* Skard (*Gammelt or Sætesdal*, i, 6).

\* *Konungr mælti: Vel er til kvæðis tekit fyrir sakir þeira hluta, er hér munu beraz í dag; ok kalla ek kvæðit Húskaflahvot* (*Fóstbræðrasaga*, p. 108); *þá þokkuðu menn honum . . . ok kǫlluðu kvæðit Húskaflahvot* (Snorri's *Oláfss. helga*).

† *Heimskr.*, ii, 63, 174, 175, 383. (Cf. V. Gúðmundsson in the Icelandic magazine, *Eimreiðinn*, xiv (1908), p. 142.

‡ Fritzner, *Oldn. Ordbog*, ii (2), 107; *húskaflagiöld* (additional fine to be paid the king for the killing of one of his men).

the reverse is true. "The designation in England for those who receive a compensation was *housecarl*, as witnessed by innumerable instances in records, chronicles, and the Domesday-book." \* In the old Danish Vederlov† the *huskarla-stefne* is the hustings of the king's men, and the *huskarla-dom*, the verdict arrived at there. Quite on a line with these formations would be a *húskarla-hvøt*, an exhortation to the Danish housecarls.

One may take the question up from another side also. We may ask: by what name did Saxo know this song about Hrolf's warriors? His mention of the lay is as follows: "This series of exhortations I have reproduced in verse-form, especially because the whole course of these utterances is given in a Danish lay and kept in the memory of diverse men who know the old traditions." One might wonder why Saxo is speaking only about "exhortations," seeing that he has in mind the entire lay with its dramatic structure; one would rather expect its name to be given as Biarkamal or Biarki-speeches. But his *exhortationum series* is natural enough in case these words render the Danish name of the lay. Hence I look for an expression in our ancient language which has the meaning of exhortation and can be used for a series of them. The word lies right at hand. It is *hvøt*, "encouragement," "song of exhortation." Saxo does not say "the warriors' exhortation" or any such thing, but only "exhortations," *hvøt*, song of exhortation (in Saxo's language \**hwat* or \**hwatin* ‡). This designation

\* Steenstrup, *Normannerne*, iv, 134, cf. 136. This holds true also for Swedish Uppland, see Brate and Bugge, *Runverser*, no. 56, 80.

† The first written Danish Laws (12th cent.).

‡ In Old Danish we find only the verb *hwættē* "to egg on" (Kalkar, *Ordbog*,

does not among the poets presuppose epic interest as much as lyric interest; it is "the song of encouragement" only for the Danish housecarls who are accustomed to go to battle accompanied by its strains.

There is good reason to emphasize this designation of the housecarls' *hvøt*, or "song of encouragement"; for it points to the lay's most prominent characteristic, its display of lyric strength. Interspersed among the dialogue portions of the lay there are three monologues of considerable length, each essentially lyrical. Considering their extent and contents they are really to be called the three main parts of the poem, being an expression of the most essential things the poet had on his mind; whereas the changing dramatic scenes — which really are but short and fleeting glimpses — serve chiefly to mark off these more extensive monologues.

The lay begins with Hialti's first short song of encouragement, suddenly ringing forth in the stillness of the night and interrupted by Biarki's first speech, which ends again forthwith. Then comes Hialti's first long speech, about the life of the king's men, with a description of the gifts which the faithful housecarls have received from their lord, and an account of their duty to follow wherever he leads; at the same time we see — through Hialti's speech — Hrolf's warriors seize their

ii, 326). For the noun *hvat* "inciting speech" we have (besides *húskarlahvøt* and "*exhortationum series*") only the support which lies in the idea of "poem of incitement" being so richly developed in the Biarkamal (which at any rate in Icelandic tradition is a *hvøt*); and Starkath's song addressed to Ingiald (by Müllenhoff called *Starkaðarhvøt*). These facts have all the more weight as this species of poem is but little developed in North Scandinavian literature; for the *Guðrúnarhvøt* but poorly answers its name. Now, if the Norwegians so rarely employ this poetic form they are not very likely to have invented a special term for it.

arms, grasp their swords, and fasten their coats of mail; we see them hurling themselves upon the superior forces of Hiarvarth, and, hard pressed, retreating again to the castle-court through the broken gate. And now the fight approaches so closely to the young chanting house-carl that his long speech is cut short by the dramatic scene in which he warns Biarki's wife Hrut to flee from the impending tumult of battle and, beholding Biarki still sleeping, calls out to him. Thereupon he returns to his warriors, and rallies the scattered troops anew in order to avenge Hrolf. This is the second long speech, the panegyric of the hero king, alluding to events in his life and abounding in the very strongest words of praise; its place in the middle of the poem indicates it to be the chief part and the most essential in contents. It is interrupted by another dialogue in which Hialti for the third time calls Biarki who finally enters the battle. This introduces the third speech, Biarki's monologue, which repeats the chief thoughts typical of the king's men, but converted into personal terms: he tells about his weapons; we learn of his powerful participation in the battle, of his earlier exploits and the king's gift to him, until he also — as do all of Hrolf's warriors — succumbs to superior numbers. A dialogue with Hialti ends the speech; we see the champions separate and sink to the ground, overcome in battle. A small dramatic scene is furnished by Hrut's finding her dying husband. Thereupon the poem again rises to a climax, ending finally with a lyrical exhortation; it is the warrior's duty to lie by his lord's body and thereby have his honor proclaimed to later generations, and this conclusion is, like the introductory song of Hialti, quite brief.

No one can fail to note this characteristic structure. The poem consists of three long and chiefly lyrical parts of about equal size, separated from each other by brief dramatic interludes.\*

It is this preponderance of the lyrical element which gives the Biarkamal its exceptional position in Old Norse literature. In the poems of the Edda and the lays related to them, the presentation is more objective and dramatic; short, quickly shifting dialogue carries the action forward in decisive scenes. Some of the poems make use of dialogue only in order to give the contents; thus several of the mythological poems as well as the historic poems of the Hrafnsmal and the Eiriksmal, which have their metre in common with the Biarkamal. The Biarkamal also makes use of the same means, but, let it be remembered, only in its outer form. As a whole it is made up of lyric portions with a dramatic framework. The lays of the Edda offer no parallel to this relation; even the *Guðrúnarhvot* which, as indicated by its name, is the most lyrical of them, contains but a few stanzas of incitement, the remainder is Guthrun's retrospective account of her life.

The Biarkamal is, therefore, much more closely related to the Danish poems connected with the Scyldings. Starkath's indignant lay reproaching Ingiald contains lyrical portions, in fact is lyrical from one end to the other. Still there is some difference; the Lay of Ingiald

\* The relation between the real "exhortation" and the smaller dramatic scenes may be indicated roughly by the following numbers of stanzas: 1 + 1 + 6 + 2 + 1 + 7 + 1½ + 8½ + 2½ + 2 + 2. This symmetry very likely is a corroboration of my surmises as to how many stanzas of the old song are concealed in Saxo's Latin text.

shares with the poems of the Edda their excellent, firm structure, with increase of dramatic tension toward the climax, toward the moment when the young king springs up to avenge his father. The Biarkamal has some splendid dramatic episodes but it lacks a center of action of this nature.

There is some element present in it which leads away from the style of the Eddic poems; away, that is, from the classic times of Northern heroic poetry. It undoubtedly leads us to an older period in which the art of presentation peculiar to the North, viz., the energetically brief dramatic form, was not yet fully developed. This older period we see represented, to a certain extent, in Anglo-Saxon poetry. There is, of course no thought of believing it a source of the Biarkamal, but, rather, as having some elements in common with it as an inheritance from the times before or during the emigration of the Angles and Saxons, in the time when English and Danish poetry were neighbors. There must be some old element at the bottom of the constant tendency of Anglo-Saxon poetry to resolve itself into lyric monologues. More definitely, we can point to the exhortations to battle in a style similar to that of the Biarkamal which we have traced through Anglo-Saxon and Old Saxon poetry. In this particular (the song of exhortation) the Biarkamal doubtless follows old tradition, and certainly also an old custom, of weaving lyric passages into heroic poetry. A reliable testimony to the connection between Anglo-Saxon and Old Danish songs of exhortation is found in Starkath's speech of incitement directed to Ingiald, the germ of which is seen in the old



warrior's challenge to the Heathobards as reported in *Beowulf*.

There is another peculiar feature in the *Biarkamal* which reminds one of the English epics. Their poets have time and space a-plenty at their disposal; for which reason full accounts of past events are put in the mouths of the various persons. How often does not the poet of *Beowulf* turn aside to dwell on some piece of old history: whilst the Danes are drinking in the hall, with glad minds and elated by victory, the skald sings about the Frisians' and Hildeburg's sorrow; King Hrothgar in his long speech about the duties of a king adduces the story of Heremod the Cruel as an antitype; *Beowulf* in the hall of the Geatish king describes not only his reception by the Danish king but also the history of princess Freawaru, etc. The same tendency to drift into recollections of past times is found also in the smaller epics; the poet of the *Widsith* now rambles on about Offa's fight by the boundary, now about the battles of the Geats near the Vistula or about the life at the court of Eadgils. In the *Biarkamal* we have the same epic accounts of the happenings of former times. Thus Hrolf's conflict with Hrcerek is told in full, his expedition to Upsala is mentioned, also his life with the housecarls, and Biarki's fight with Agnar is described in three stanzas. All these incidents are interwoven — not at all in order to make some connection in the action, but whenever suggested by some momentary association. To be sure, the episodes deal with incidents of Hrolf's and Biarki's life; but they are interspersed in haphazard manner, if judged by the standards of epic poetry.

This constitutes a great contrast to the firmer structure of the poems of the Edda. There the rapidly shifting dialogue permits, to be sure, allusions to past events, but never an account of them; unless, indeed, the matter is closely connected with the subject in hand. Even the longer poems of a retrospective or prophetic nature stick to one single person and depict a compact action in its gradual development. For this reason I cannot agree with Svend Grundtvig who in his excellent little book on Heroic Poetry sees in the Biarkamal the first step in a development away from the objective art of the best songs of the Edda and toward the style of the later lays in which the heroes or heroines look back and tell about their lives.\* In fact, when comparing the Biarkamal with all other Northern lays, we find it to belong to a simpler type of art in which neither the lyric nor the epic elements are as strictly held in place as in the classic poems of the Edda. This evaluation is corroborated by comparison with Anglo-Saxon poetry as being the art of that non-Scandinavian people which is most closely akin: the style of either antedates the characteristically Scandinavian development. Its style is most probably connected with the type general during the period of the Migration of Nations, with the lays and songs of the skalds as they rode around the funeral pile and gave expression to the longings and the sentiments of admiration that filled them in those moments — as we may gather from the obsequies of Attila and of Beowulf.

\* *Udsigt over den heroiske digtning* (1867), p. 87.

In a recent article by A. Heusler, *Der Dialog in der altgermanischen erzählenden dichtung* (Z. f. d. A. 46, 189-284), excellent in many respects, a different line of argument is pursued. Agreeing with S. Grundtvig, Heusler recognizes but one Teutonic form of the heroic lay, the vigorous epic style which culminates in dialogue, and in which each dialogue serves to carry the action further. Thus he sees in the epic breadth of Beowulf only the result of a later epic development (p. 219). But the characteristic Anglo-Saxon manner of introducing epic fragments in a lyric fashion plays so great a rôle also in the smaller pieces that this explanation does not satisfy. Furthermore, there is the resemblance of the Biarkamal to the Anglo-Saxon style, which may be recommended to the consideration of scholars. In general, it would seem to me as if Heusler, whose thoroughness in collecting all evidence in order to determine and explain the chief form of the epic is to be acknowledged, had been a little too eager to get rid of what one might call the secondary epic forms, viz., the catalogue poem, the epic without dialogue, the pure dialogue, etc.

The result we have arrived at corresponds exactly to what we concluded from the subject matter. There we found that the Biarkamal was nearly akin to the commemorative songs of the period immediately following, whose structure, notwithstanding many similarities to the style of the north Scandinavian Edda, still shows many traces of the old, more diffuse and artless epos, both when lyrically surrendering to the subject and in respect to the episodes strewn in.

Accordingly, we may regard the Biarkamal as one of the oldest Scandinavian lays. Perhaps we may express this by giving a more definite date: the Biarkamal was composed during the first century of the Viking Period.

Its age may be determined also in another way. We may point out old lays that have come down to us which it resembles; and we may, possibly, trace a line

of development in which some place may be assigned to it. I confine my investigation to those lays which have the same metre as the *Biarkamal*, that is, lines of (generally) five syllables, or *málaháttir*.

The *Atlakviða* stands nearest, both in spirit and in phraseology. We find in it the same description of the life interesting to heroic times: a fond dwelling on treasures and weapons which are given as presents or are hoarded as, e.g., the treasures with which the messengers seek to lure the *Giukungs* to *Atli's* court:

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| <p>4. Skjöldu knegub velja<br/>ok skafna aska,<br/>hjalma gollhroþna<br/>ok Húna mengi,<br/>silfrgyld sǫþulklæpi,<br/>serki val[rauba],<br/>dafar darraþar,<br/>drǫsla mélgreypa</p> | <p>4. Shields may ye choose there<br/>and shafts of ash tree<br/>eke helmets gold-burnished<br/>and Huns full many,<br/>silver-gilt saddle-cloths<br/>and sarks gory red,<br/>darts and battle-spears<br/>and bit-champing steeds.</p> |
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But *Gunnar* makes answer to the effect that, however great the treasures of *Gnita-heath*, his own are fully their equal:

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| <p>7. Sjau eigum salhús<br/>sverþa full hverju,<br/>[hver] eru þeira<br/>hjǫlt ór golli.<br/>Minn veitk mar baztan,<br/>mæki hvassastan,<br/>boga bekksøma,<br/>en brynjur ór golli;<br/>hjálm [minn] hvítastan<br/>kominn ór hǫll Kíars<br/>einn er minn betri<br/>an séi allra Húna.</p> | <p>7. Seven halls have we<br/>with swords filled each one<br/>whose hilts are made<br/>of heavy gold;<br/>my steed I ween swiftest<br/>and my sword sharpest,<br/>my bows bench-seeming,<br/>my byrnies all golden;<br/>and my helmet all bright<br/>from the hall of <i>Kiar</i><br/>to me liefer is<br/>than thy liege's hoard.</p> |
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In the *Atlakvitha* is seen also the sentiment for the body-guard, who — in contrast to other poems of the *Edda* — always are designated as *húskarlar* (reminding one of the title *húskarlavǫt*).<sup>\*</sup> The warriors are accompanied by the same clangor of arms: “The castle resounded with clash of arms and stamp of steeds as they stormed from the heath.” I do not mean to dwell on verbal similarities but rather point out some characteristics common to both. The *Atlakvitha* endows its main characters with vigor and enthusiasm; but it lacks those features which give Old Norse poetry in general its objective character. Its ability to create living dialogue is comparatively small, its persons frequently speak in monologues. Just as in the *Biarkamal*, the speakers are confined to the little circle about the king: they are chiefly Gunnar and Guthrun; once, Hogni; once, the messenger; then again Atli, and Hogni’s young son, each with a few words. The lack of objectivity is seen most clearly in the figure of Atli; like Hiarvarth in the *Biarkamal* he remains in the background and never manifests his character by any real action. How very different from the other foemen and knaves of the *Edda* who characterize themselves as well as does the hero, as, e.g., Regin contrasted with Sigurth, Jormunrek with Hamthir.

There is remarkable similarity in the poetical treatment; to be sure, this will not help much toward assigning a date. The *Atlakvitha* is assumed by some — who judge from its general aspect — to be one of the

<sup>\*</sup> Here I may point out another resemblance to Danish: *salhus* is a common word both in middle and in modern Jutish (*salhus* > *sals*).

oldest lays of the Edda. Others reckon it amongst the latest, because, among other reasons, the religious respect for the gods seems so weak in it. I shall not attempt to decide the question but only call attention to the fact that we have here precisely the same case as in the Biarkamal: form and tradition belong to the older times, but the belief in the heathen gods is shaken.

This fundamental relationship between the Biarkamal and the Atlakvitha is highly remarkable. It is for this reason that the Eddic lay has been helpful in detecting the ancient material in the Latin Biarkamal. However, it would lead us too far afield to examine all the bearings of this relation at this time.

There is another little group of poems in *málaháttir* which resemble the Biarkamal in their semi-dramatic form: the historical lays of the *Hrafnsmál*, about Harold Hairfair, and the *Eiríksmál*, about Eric Bloody-axe. The last mentioned shows least similarity. Its dramatic form appears more fully developed, if we may judge correctly from the abbreviated form in which it has come down to us. In the beginning of the lay Othin makes ready to receive new warriors in Valhalla; we hear the din of the host of the slain, treading the way of the dead and now drawing near; all the while Othin is speaking with his Einherjar about the new guest; then the foremost warriors among them rise at Othin's behest and bid Eric welcome; we see him stand on Valhalla's threshold with the fallen kings and all his host. A powerful dramatic life pulses through this poem; the narrative easily fits into the action, and yet we are afforded glimpses of Eric's life as warrior, of his last battle, and

of the whole world of the gods from Balder's death to the Fenriswolf and the doom of the gods; the drama easily takes care of all this material. It is very different with the "Raven's speech" (*Hrafnsmál*), Thorbiörn hornklofi's famous poem about Harold Hairfair. In it there is no dramatic development, only dialogue and narrative from beginning to end. In the morning hour the valkyria meets the raven flying from the battlefield with bloody beak and with fibres from the bodies of the slain clinging to his claws, and she inquires where he comes from. The dark-feathered one shakes up his plumage and dries his beak on the cliff; then he makes answer: "We follow Harold, the son of Halfdan, the young prince, from the time we crept out of the shell." The raven then begins to tell about Harold's armaments and victories, about his spouse and his court. Each time one point has been answered the valkyria desires information on another and thus manages to cover everything, from his war-fleet to his dog artists. The poet was aware of this being but a fortuitous frame and is naïve enough to tell his listeners so in the very first stanza: "Listen, ring-bearing warriors, the while I tell about the powerful Harold's spear-exploits; I tell of what I heard the fair golden-haired maiden speak about with the raven." This is remarkably awkward, in comparison to the skill displayed in the *Eiriksmal* and the *Hakonarmal* in fitting the historic material into a mythic-dramatic frame. Nevertheless, we may not regard Thorbiörn hornklofi as a poor skald (there are some splendid descriptions in his poem); the situation is to be explained, rather, by the fact that he

was not yet able in his times — toward the end of the ninth century — to exercise the same mastery in composing dramatically, an art which a few generations later had become general property.

For Thorbjørn the main point was not the frame but the narrative. He expatiates with pleasure on a description of the life of the king's men about Harold for which the spacious five syllable metre gives him room. And these descriptions, not of individuals but of the whole body of men, with an account of splendid weapons and other war equipment, remind one distinctly of the *Biarkamal*, where the epic form of the dialogue serves for a similar description. But the poet of the *Biarkamal* masters the dialogue form and has an ability to make it instinct with life which is incomparably superior to that of Thorbjørn.

We are now able to trace the line of development through the three stages:

1. The dialogue poem (*mál*) as a still undeveloped means for describing the life of king's men and heroes: *Hrafnsmál*, about 890.

2. The dialogue poem used for the description of the life of king's men and heroes, with a mastery of the dramatic form: *Biarkamál*.

3. The description at one with the dramatic framework: *Eiríksmál*, about 954.

In this development the *Biarkamal* is a step between the *Hrafnsmál* and the *Eiríksmál*, but closer to the former because still partial to the broader description. Judging from this, the date of the *Biarkamal* is about 900 or shortly after. The question may be still raised



whether this manner of dating by means of Norse lays is permissible for the Biarkamal as originating in Denmark. But judging from what we know of the development of the dramatically compact style — away from the epic breadth of Teutonic or at any rate of Anglo-Saxon poetry — it is one common to the entire Scandinavian North. In case there should be any difference in time the development in Denmark most likely preceded the one in Norway by a trifle.

Let us examine how this date — roughly about the year 900 — compares with Danish affairs as background. The Runic inscriptions about the year 900 begin to reflect a rich development of poetry. It is precisely the *málaháttir* which is evident in most of the older inscriptions. In an imperfect form it appears on the Tryggevælde stone (900), fully developed on the South Vissing and the Store Rygbjærg stones (about 960–970); but never in the later inscriptions. In the poems of which these Runic verses are a reflection, the *málaháttir* must have flourished from before 900 till about 950, then to be eclipsed by the lighter four-syllable verse.\*

Much more important it is, however, that this period furnishes the fitting historic background for this body of poetry. The ninth century witnessed battle after battle in the terrific struggles for the Danish throne; the exploits of the Viking Period made the desire for deeds and the hope for glory rise on strong wings. In contrast to other Danish lays the Biarkamal shows no

\* Cf. for the present my article “*Runestenenes vidnesbyrd om dansk åndsliv*” (*Dania*, iv), esp. pp. 121–122. Cf. also Wimmer, *Danske Runemindesmærker*, ii, 395 (Tryggevælde), 111 (Rygbjærg); only one of the older stones has four syllable verse (Rimsø, 930–950, *DR*, ii, 77).

interest in the Danish people, the royal race, and the king's residence. The relations of Denmark with the Saxon empire lie entirely without the interests of our lay; the poet had scarcely taken a part in the border warfare between the Carolingians and the Danish kings, which played a large rôle during a great part of the ninth century and started up once more in 936. On the other hand, the emphasis with which the Swedes are mentioned as Hiarvarth's followers is noteworthy, seeing that Hiarvarth himself is not a Swedish king. But just this fact points to a definite political situation in Denmark at the beginning of the tenth century. At that time Olaf who came over from Sweden had usurped the royal title, and his sons Giurth (< *Guðrøðr*) and Gnupa maintained a part of the Danish realm by stubborn warfare against the house of Gorm.

As was pointed out above, the poet of the Biarkamal himself participated eagerly in the warlike life of the housecarls. In his song of praise to Hrolf's warriors we may detect the feeling for his own companions in arms and especially his devotion to his own king. In casting about for some particular court where he may have been stationed, we naturally think first of the opponents of the Swedish usurpers; not of Gorm or his son Harold who were rulers of Denmark till the beginning of the tenth century; but rather of the founder of a new race of kings, "Hardegon son of Svein" (Adam of Bremen, I, 54) who, coming from Nortmannia rose to be king of Denmark; the same, probably, who is called Hqrthaknut, father of Gorm the Old. The most important facts fit this hypothesis; the hard and bitter fight, the

enemies being called Swedes, and last not least the remarkable lack of any reference to the old Scylding traditions in our lay and to royal genealogy in general; nowhere else would it suit so well as at the court of this chieftain who wins the throne by his own strength and who attaches a great host of warriors to himself by purely personal bonds. For he who can lead them to victory and distribute gold, he forsooth is the hero of the Biarkamal. On the other hand, the Biarkamal certainly was composed before the border fights and the construction of the Dannevirke reinvigorated the national feeling and gave it a new direction. These newer conceptions are reflected in other, certainly later, poems; but the Biarkamal, as we know, stands on the dividing line, harking back to the older ideals of warrior and king's men.\*

\* Cf. *Danmarks heltedigtning*, ii, *passim*.

## CHAPTER IV

### LEGENDS OF HROLF'S WARRIORS

#### 1. HIALTI

**T**HE preëminent position which the old poet gave to Biarki is maintained in later times, both in Saxo's tradition and, more strongly still, in the Icelandic *Hrolfssaga* and the *Biarkarimur* in which the accounts of Biarki and his kinsmen almost eclipse those of King Hrolf himself. Still more remarkable is the place claimed by Hialti. In the ancient lay he altogether lacked any personal experiences; but in the prose accounts current in Denmark and Iceland, not differing widely from each other, his life is rich in characteristic scenes: Biarki's help against the bone throwing of the warriors, the drinking of the bear's blood, and the farewell from his leman on the night of Hiarvarth's attack.

His first experience, the bone throwing, is briefly told in Saxo's Danish tradition. The scene occurs at Agnar's marriage with Hrolf's sister Hrut: "The champions were rioting at this banquet with every sort of wantonness, and flinging from all over the room knobbed bones at a certain Hialti; but it chanced that his messmate, named Biarki, received a violent blow on the head through the ill aim of the thrower; at whom, stung both by the pain and the jeering, he sent the bone back, so that he twisted the front of his head to the

back, and wrung the back of it to where the front had been; punishing the wryness of the man's temper by turning his face sidelong. This deed moderated their wanton and injurious jests, and drove the champions to quit the palace." \*

The Icelanders tell of the same occurrence in a more detailed account which is a pretty example of the saga tellers' skill in preparing and minutely describing a remarkable occurrence; the account is essentially the same in the *Hrolfssaga* and the *Biarkarimur*. It begins with a little introduction: *Bøthvar biarki* comes riding to Leire through rain and over sodden roads in order to seek service with King Hrolf. His horse is stopped by a steep slope which proves to be the hovel of some poor people. The two old folks receive him well, and ask only that Biarki shall cast none but small bones at their son Høtt, who lives in the king's hall as the target for the coarse practical jokes of the warriors. (This *karl* and *kerling* and their timid loutishness are favorites with the Icelandic saga tellers; even their hovel is described as something like a rough Icelandic earth hut.) The next day, *Bøthvar* arrives at the hall of the king at Leire; he hears something rattling in the heap of bones in the corner of the hall, and sees a black hand appearing above it; he approaches and hauls the boy Høtt out of the heap and forces him to sit by his side. The warriors begin to throw bones at them; *Bøthvar* catches a big joint in mid-air and returns it to him who had thrown it, hitting his brow with such force that he falls dead. King Hrolf is called, and settles the matter by

\* Elton's English translation, p. 68.

deciding that Bøthvar and the boy shall occupy the killed man's seat among the king's men.

This legend of Biarki and Hialti refers to a custom of former days: the game or sport of casting the gnawed bones at each other as a kind of ball and of catching them in mid-air. This custom was deeply rooted in Scandinavia, for in the Middle Ages — witness the laws of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries — it was punishable by severe fines: “If a man throws stone or bone at another so as to hit him therewith, it is a fine of three ‘marks’”; “It is a ‘nithing’s deed’ (i.e., a crime of the worst sort) to hurl a bone at a man so that it becomes his death,” etc. In the Faroe Islands, or more correctly, in the most remote of them, Suderø, the custom was preserved in the merrymaking at feasts, “though more for mirth and sport than for doing evil.” Among the Icelanders of the later Middle Ages the throwing of heavy bones was conceived to be the sport, not of human beings, but of trolls, and is described in scenes reminding one of the encounter between Biarki and Hrolf’s men.\*

One thing is not clear from these accounts, why poor Hialti was the daily target of the king’s men. The answer is offered in another source. Sven Aggison in his “Witherlaw”† tells us that he who had thrice

\* With regard to the laws, cf. *Arkiv f. n. fil.*, xxiv, 179–181. The Faroese custom is mentioned in an unprinted letter, of Jan. 20, 1820, from the ballad collector J. H. Schrøter, vicar in Kvalbø, Suderø, to the famous folklorist, P. E. Müller (Univ. Library, Copenhagen, Arnamagnæan Collection, 972 A). As to the custom in giant world, cf. the *Bárðarsaga Snæfellsdæss*, c. 15, and *Saga af þorsteini bæarmagni* (Fornmannasögur, iii, 186); as referring to men of olden times, cf. *Göngu-Hrólfs saga* (Fas., iii, 310).

† The law for the royal bodyguard, edited by King Canute the Great about 1020, but written down from oral tradition only in the twelfth century.

broken the statutes of the company should be seated lowest of all, and that all partaking in the feast should have permission to throw bones at him.\*

From this source we learn, then, that the custom of throwing bones obtained in the hall of the Danish kings during the Viking Age and that he who was most looked down upon was made the target of all. The only difference between Hialti's case and the custom referred to is that Hialti was not degraded to this position but occupied it naturally as the youngest and weakest of the men. But why should this distinction count with brutal warriors, considering the popular custom of maltreating the weakest boy in a company?

It is evident, then, that there existed in ancient Scandinavia a custom of throwing the gnawed-off bones from one person to another; that it was regarded as a sport in which the strong and agile warrior showed his skill by catching the bones in mid-air and hurling them back with great force at him who sent them; that it was a dangerous sport; that it was particular fun to hurl bones at the despised fellow on the lowest bench; that this custom was practiced in the royal Danish hall and that the ill treatment of the weakest of the men is known only there. The story of Biarki and Hialti thus shows a combination of all these motifs. The poetical exaggeration is limited to the interweaving of them: the strong warrior appears as the protector of the despised one.

\* Amplius, si quem obtinata presumptio ternis incorrigibilem notaverit excessibus, et resipiscere detrectaverit, extremum omnium locandum statuerunt et pro arbitrio cujuslibet ossibus eum jactandum. — *Svenonis Aggonis Leges castrenses*, cap. 5.

The story of the bear fight is told most simply and clearly in the Danish version. It is said of Biarki that he "came upon a bear in the bush and felled him with his spear, and thereupon he made his follower Hialti put his mouth to the wound and drink the blood streaming from it in order that it should increase his strength. For they believed that this drink added to the strength of the body."

In the Biarkarimur the story is told as follows: One day Biarki took Hialti along, without the king's men knowing of it. "Let us not come near this forest," says Hialti, "a she-wolf haunts it which eats men, and she will kill us both." The wolf rushes at them with open jaws; Hialti quakes in every limb; but Biarki attacks the beast, burying his axe in her head up to the shaft. The blood gushes forth in torrents. "Now choose one of two things," says Biarki, "drink the blood of this animal, or else I shall kill you." Hialti complains that he cannot drink blood, but nevertheless he bends down and drinks three swallows. He feels his strength growing within him; he becomes as strong as a troll, and all his clothes fall off him in rags. Now his cowardice has disappeared, and he is Biarki's equal in bravery.

As a second episode the rimur relate that there is a grizzly bear near the gate of the castle at Leire which has killed the shepherd dogs. Hrolf bids his men go out to kill the monster; he who would fight him single-handed shall be reckoned the bravest of his men. Roaring, the bear rushes out of his den and lays about him with his paws so that the warriors fall back. Hialti



stands by, looking at the fight; he is entirely without arms. Then Hrolf throws him his sword. Hialti seizes it by the hilt and thrusts it into the right shoulder of the bear, which falls dead. From this exploit Hialti received the epithet of Hialti the Stouthearted, and was reckoned Biarki's equal.

The account in the Hrolfssaga is a little different. Toward Yuletide there comes a winged monster which destroys all the land; it is invulnerable to arms and kills several of Hrolf's warriors. At night Bøthvar issues against it, compelling Høtt to accompany him. Bøthvar plunges his sword into the monster's heart. Then he fetches Høtt, who is lying on the moss, overcome by fright, and lets him drink two big swallows of the animal's blood and eat a little of its heart; this makes Høtt so strong that he can wrestle with Bøthvar. They raise the animal so as to make it look as if it were living. Next day, King Hrolf and his warriors issue to fight with it; but Høtt undertakes to kill the animal, on condition that he may wield the king's sword *Gullinhialti* (golden hilt). With it he easily accomplishes the deed. The king suspects who really slew the beast, but nevertheless declares Biarki's greatest feat to be his having filled Høtt with courage: from now on he is to own the sword and to be called Hialti.

In several respects this last account is of the least value. The animal which is killed is described as some winged monster, which is not in any way necessitated by the story, but suits the prevailing taste of the later Icelandic hero sagas in representing the Sphinx, or *Finngalkn* as it was called; similarly, there is the man-

dragon slain by Orvar-Odd on the coast of England, and the centaur which, in a saga still more approaching the manner of a fairy-story, is delivered by Hialmther's kiss.\* Another favorite trick of the saga men is to let the killed bear be raised up as if he were still alive; whereas by rights the story ought to have adduced a real test of Hialti's courage.† In this respect, the narrative of the Biarkarimur is superior to the saga, and in the first and most essential point it is corroborated by the Danish tradition.

The Danish story is built solely on the motif of drinking the blood of the beast of prey. And this account exactly answers to the superstition which not only existed in former times, as Saxo thinks, but has lived on down to our own times. Scarcely a hundred years have passed since the bear hunters of southeastern Norway, after killing the animal, immediately put their mouths to the wound and sucked the blood while it was still warm. "Even in our times it is the custom in many places (in Swedish Norrland) after a successful bear hunt or elk chase to drink the warm blood of the animal." ‡ This belief must have been widely held formerly, and rests of course on the commonly entertained notion that with

\* Cf. my treatment in *Saksø's oldhistorie*, ii, 4; Bugge, on the *finngalkn*, *Aarbøger*, 1895, 124-125.

† In the same manner Finnbogi in the *Finnbogasaga* sets up the bear he has slain, as does also the fifteen year old Sigmund in the *Færeyingasaga*; Vithga, in the *Thithreksaga*, raises the giant he has killed and Orvar-Odd sets up a bear in order to shoot at the giants from behind it (*Fas.*, ii, 157).

‡ Reuterschiöld, *De nordiska Lapparnas religion* (1912), p. 31 (Ekman, *Norrlands jakt och fiske*, 81). See also *Topografisk Journal over Norge*, xi, 49; Leem, *Beskrivelse af Finnmarkens Lapper*, p. 404. On the other hand the Lapps did not in ancient times have this custom when hunting bears (*Friis, Lappisk myt.*, p. 157).

the blood a part of the slain person's, or animal's, soul and nature could be transferred to the slayer. From this one may also see how incorrect is the *Hrolfssaga* in describing the monster as "not an animal but the worst troll"; in which case there would not be much pleasure in assimilating its nature.

The Norwegian hunter's custom is mentioned in an account of the Trysil district in Østerdal, 1784, with the remark: "as I have heard, they probably still do this, though more rarely than in former times." Also the Lapps in northern Norway drank the warm blood of the animal, the wild reindeer or seal, as a cure of inner weakness.\* A similar account is found in the Middle High German poem *Kudrun* (stanza 100 ff.) about the king's son Hagen: "From his shelter he issued into the forest. There saw he many animals strong and fierce, one among them wanted to swallow him. He slew it with his sword: it had to feel his wrath. It was like to a "gabilûn" (that is Chamæleon, a fabled animal with gaping jaws). He began to flay it, he longed for its blood; then when he had drunk his fill of it he became exceeding strong. He bethought him of many a thing." He then dragged the dead animal home to his shelter to procure the maidens some change in their food. (With very little reason some scholars have in the above seen a reflection of the story of Sigurth and Fafni, for the action involves only the hunters' ideas: to drink the blood to increase their own strength, then to flay the animal, and bring its meat home as food for the family).

The motif of partaking of the blood or meat of the slain animal occurs in Northern heroic poetry in three different types: it is done in order to obtain wisdom from the dragon's heart-blood (Sigurth motif); to acquire pugnacity and ill-nature by eating wolf-meat (Guthorm motif); to obtain strength from the blood of the bear or other wild animal (Biarki motif). In the lays and in the best legends these motifs occur unmixed; but most of the *Fornaldarsagas* show an intermixture. The Sigurth motif occurs in its simple form in the *Fáfnismál*, when Sigurth roasts the dragon's heart. The wolf motif is seen unmixed in the *Brot af Brynhildarkviðu* (stanza 4), where the Giukungs by sorcery induce Guthorm to kill his brother-in-law; and

\* *Topografisk Journal over Norge*, as above.

when Ingiald illrathi by his foster-father is given the wolf's heart to eat in order that he may imbibe a desire for revenge (*Ynglinga-saga*, c. 34). But the two motifs are intermixed when Sigurth gives Guthrun Fafni's heart to eat "and then she became much more cruel than before" (*Volsungasaga*, c. 26). The bear-motive occurs unmixed in the Danish account of Biarki, which closely agrees with the real hunters' customs. The versions of the Biarkarimur has already taken up a little of the second type of motif when it is a she-wolf's blood Hialti is compelled to drink. The shifting is more pronounced still in Saxo's (Norn) Haddingsaga. We are there told that Hadding is captured and exposed to be devoured by a "beast of prey," a "lion" (that is to say, probably, a wolf), but he thrusts his sword into its heart and then eats of its flesh (Saxo p. 41). The Hrolfssaga has shifted nearly as far: "Bothvar now made him take two big swallows, he bade him also eat a little of the animal's heart"; but the animal is here imagined as some fantastic monster. Another passage of the saga, however, shows the unmixed motif: Bothvar's older brother Elgfrothi, who himself is half animal, gives him his own blood to drink in order that he may grow strong and be a match for Hrolf's warriors (c. 31). This must be an imitation of the Hialti episode in an older stage, when the "animal" still was thought of as an ordinary beast of prey, and not as *hit mesta tröll*. This is one more proof of what was the original form of the Biarki-Hialti story. It is not less interesting to see that the motif which enters everywhere is a fight against some wolf (or fantastic monster) with subsequent eating of its flesh. In the heroic poetry of ancient times these animal motifs were but an expression of remarkable qualities of the hero, an addition to human power, in a good or a bad sense. In the later Fornaldarsagas the range of this motif is more restricted; there it always assumes an evil, wolfish, troll-like aspect. That is to say, an unconscious change in the significance of the motif has taken place, caused, partly, by Christian religious sentiments. It is precisely the Hrolfssaga which shows the climax of this transition to the troll-like with regard to the shape of the animal; and this is one more reason why it cannot show the original form of the Biarki story.\*

\* In this connection is to be mentioned a Danish story from Zealand in which the hunter at night lets the boy suck the breast of a mermaid he has shot; the boy becomes so strong that his master does not dare to put him

How old may these stories be ? They did not have any very definite form before the oral tradition of the twelfth century was committed to writing by Saxo; and by that time the material had shifted a little already: Hialti's change into a hero had been mixed in Danish tradition with the story of Agnar's marriage feast, which weakened the poetic effect. This is shown even more clearly by the conditions of life which belong to a different period. The warriors of the Valdemar period certainly were more courtly in their manners than the men in Hrolf's hall, and the old customs of bear hunters scarcely played any rôle among them; in those, times, bears were found on only one of the small forest-covered Danish Islands, and only one single ballad mentions a bear-fight as an every-day affair.\* As to the bone throwing, we have even more exact information. It is the custom of Danish king's men at the beginning of the eleventh century which suggested the episode. It is plainly older than the descriptions of the oldest law codices, for with these it is in strongest contrast.

The stories belong to a very old period, but to which one ? What relation have they to the Biarkamal ?

There is no doubt but that their purpose is just this, to tell us how Hialti grew up to be such a notable

to work again (Evald Tang Kristensen, *Danske sagn*, ii, 121, no. 82). This, again, is related to the Funen story of "strong Esben" who has been suckled by the mermaid, and the story of the Scanian priest who sucked a "troll-mor" (witch), (Feilberg, *Ordbog over de jyske almuesmål*, ii, 791). Perhaps, though, there is here some confusion with Hialti who sucks the blood of the beast of prey.

\* *Valdemar's rent-roll*, 135 (Ø, island in the Sli firth, near Slesvig; it seems to have been a sort of zoölogical park); *Danm. gamle Folkeviser*, no. 64, "Dalby bjørn."

warrior standing close to Hrolf in life and death. But this was a matter which did not interest the Biarkamal in the least. There, Hialti was only the typical young warrior who gave expression to the devotion of all the king's men to their lord — a figure invented by the poet himself to serve as spokesman for his feelings concerning the chieftain. The legend betrays its later origin precisely by knowing so much; for in the development of a tradition the rule is that the children know more than the parents. The younger generation professes to have a great and detailed knowledge of those matters about which the older generation was not so sure. The younger generation devises the presuppositions, the previous history, of the great events. The explanation is that their imagination is constantly stimulated by these traditions which show the hero in certain remarkable exploits, yet never know all about their history.

Where, then, did their imagination find the new episodes? Chiefly, of course, in the life round about, where it showed most rich in color, suggesting the scene of the bone throwing and the drinking of the blood in bear hunting. On the other hand, the material offered itself in the Biarkamal. All which there was necessary in the economy of the situation is later interpreted as being a representation of true life. E. g., in the lay, Biarki shows himself to be the greatest of Hrolf's warriors and speaks to Hialti with a good-natured superiority which still lets his appreciation of him be felt; they meet death together, at the king's head and feet. Now for the author of the later tradition the point is to explain for himself why these two warriors belong together; and

the answer is, the older one is foster father to the younger. If Hialti is the only warrior who approaches Biarki, he must have won his strength and his courage in some particular way. At this point the drinking of bear's blood offers itself as a motif of magic familiar to the times, just as the bone throwing offers the best opportunity to measure Biarki's strength with that of the other men.

As to Hialti and his leman, Saxo tells us that during the night of Hiarvarth's attack, Hialti had left Leire castle to go to his leman. Whilst lying in her arms he heard the tumult of the advancing army and left her in order to stand by his chieftain's side in the last battle. As he departed the woman asked him whether, after his death, she should marry an old or a young man. Hialti bade her approach as if to whisper something in her ear; when she came close he cut off her nose, incensed by her shamelessness in questioning him about a successor to her love.

The story occurs also in the Icelandic *Hrólfs saga*, in a form which is nearly akin, but coarser in details and told rather poorly. Of new features in it, only this one is of some interest that Hialti calls his leman a whore and bites off her nose.\* We shall have to rely chiefly on

\* *Hrólfs saga*, c. 49: Hialti goes to his leman's house; on his way he sees Hiarvarth's preparations, but still lies with her (!); some time after, without any external reason (!), he jumps up and asks her whether she would rather have two boys of 22 or one man of 80. She prefers the two young men to the old one. "That you shall pay for, you whore!" he cries. He comes closer to her and bites off her nose: "Remember me now, if any one wants to be with you; but there will probably not be many who will find you lovely hereafter." It is very gross and very unlikely that Hialti should be thinking of such a question in the moment when his king is in the greatest danger.

the Danish account, according to which the hero is indignant about his leman's shameless question concerning another lover in the short moment in which they part. At any rate, the punishment is of the kind one can very well imagine as inflicted for an act of unfaithfulness already committed.

However repellent to us, this maltreatment reminds one of the ancient modes of punishment among wild tribes. Among the Indians, the injured husband cuts off the nose of his faithless wife; among the ancient Egyptians, the nose was cut off in similar cases. In the period of the Migration of Nations the Vandalian prince Hunerik had his wife's nose and ears cut off, and sent her back to her father, the king of the Visigoths, at the bare suspicion of her trying to poison him. The same punishment is inflicted for other reasons, even in later times. Aribert, king of the Langobards (from 701), drove off his rival Ansbrand and murdered most of his family; he also captured Ansbrand's wife, Theodorada, and, when she exclaimed that she, with her woman's will, still would be queen again, he had her ears and nose cut off. Even down to the Middle Ages we hear of the nose being cut off, but only as punishment for thievish slave women.\* Hialti's maltreatment of his leman corresponds, then, to brutal, ancient customs. It can scarcely have been invented late in the Middle Ages, seeing that no parallels are known from any other Norse text.

In another respect,\* also, the prose account moves in regions which seem altogether too low for the ideally

\* Ferrero, *La crime d'adultère* (Archives d'anthropologie criminelle, ix, 1894, pp. 392, 395); Jordanes, *Getica*, chap. 36; Paulus Diaconus, *Hist. Langobard*, vi, c. 22; Fritsner, *Oldnorsk Ordbog*<sup>2</sup>: *núfa*.



inclined warriors of Hrolf. In keeping with Northern heroic poetry we should expect a wife of noble birth, or some high-born maiden, as Hialti's lover. Still, we must remember that we have to deal here with the warriors of ancient times, and not with their royal heroes; also, that the troop of housecarls who followed a king or chieftain did not have the opportunity to enter into a suitable marriage or to maintain an "establishment" befitting their station; for which reason they lived in a concubinage sanctioned by society. In the company of the Jomsvikings, who did not permit women to enter their stronghold, something of this kind seems indicated. Even in heroic lays irregular relations are not unknown. Thus, in the lay of Hlōth (*Hervararsaga*), King Angantyr offers his brother 1200 men, 1200 horses, and 1200 armor bearers; besides, he would give every man a necklace-adorned maiden, and this scarcely means that 1200 new marriages are to be entered into, or that so many households are to be established.

Closest, however, comes a story preserved in the Large Saga of Olaf Tryggvason which seems to contain a memory of the great slaughter of the Danes by the English in 1002. King Svein, so the story goes, drove king Æthelred from England and established his "*þingmannalið*" (his suite of housecarls) in London, whilst the sixty ships of his followers lay in the Thames. Once — it was a week before Yuletide — one of Svein's men went to the house of his leman. She begged and prayed him to stay with her all night; but he would not, because the housecarls were forbidden to stay away during the night without permission. Finally, however,

he consented, on condition that she should tell him the reason. Then she told him that if he stayed at home he would be killed together with the whole host of the king's men; for the wagons which to all appearances had come to the London market were really filled with armed men; and when the Danes, weaponless, should issue to hear the matins, while it was still dark, they were to be attacked in the churchyard and killed. Thord hurried back and informed Eilif, chieftain of the housecarls, of the danger. Eilif warned his people to be on guard; still a number of them went unarmed. When they arrived at the churchyard it was full of armed Englishmen. To enter the church would have meant going into a trap. So Eilif ordered his men to hew their way to the ships; but many were slain before they reached them, and he escaped from England with only three ships (*Flateyjarbók*, i, 203-205).

The story of Hialti's visit to his leman contains the earlier history, or explanation, of the scene with which the Biarkamal begins, Hialti's being without the castle at night and discovering the enemy approaching. But this undoubtedly means that the story arose as an explanation of the lay. At the same time, the narrator treats a side of the life of the housecarls which the lay touches only in passing: the *vífs rúnar* (the secret converse with a woman) for which there is no time when "Hild's play" is begun. It is the real life of that age, and perhaps also a glimpse of old barbaric custom, which has given the passing allusion of the lay fullness and content in the saga. There seems to be some special connection between the saga and the attack on the Danish

housecarls by the English which was discovered by the king's man who had gone to visit his leman. In the London story this feature is intimately associated with the course of events; but in the account of Hrolf's fall it is unessential. Accordingly, Hialti's story is probably a reflection of the London attack, and cannot be explained only as a tradition. It is in no wise unlikely that the real event from the time of the viking expeditions furnished a motif for the legends clustering about Hrolf's warriors.\*

## 2. BIARKI AND AGNAR

We have two different accounts of Biarki's single combat with Agnar Ingialdsson; a Danish one in Saxo, and an Icelandic one in the *Biarkarimur*. The only thing common to them is that they both agree with the *Biarkamal*. In the Icelandic tradition, Biarki slays Agnar in the battle and receives Hrolf's daughter as his reward. In Saxo, there are no hostilities of any kind. One "Agner, the son of Ingell" is about to celebrate his marriage with Hrolf's sister Ruta (Hrut); in the course of the feast Biarki — as related above — hurls a bone at one of the warriors. Incensed by this, the bridegroom challenges Biarki to a single combat. Agnar, being of nobler birth, had the first blow; for in those days the important thing was not to deal blows as rapidly as possible; there was a definite order, with intervals between the blows. Agnar cleft Biarki's helmet and

\* An agreement in a smaller point is seen in both *Hiarvarth's* warriors (acc. to the *Skioldungasaga*) and the Englishmen entering the city concealed in wagons, as do the Russians in their attack on Hvitserk, in the Norwegian *Ragnarsaga* (cf. *Sakse's oldh.*, ii, 114, 126). To be sure, this similarity may be due to later influence in Icelandic tradition.

wounded him on the skull. Then Biarki placed one foot on a tree trunk in order to deal his foeman a stronger blow, and cut Agnar's body in two. Thereupon the warriors rushed up to avenge their master, but fell before Biarki's sword Laufi. Later, Hrolf gave him his sister Hrut to wife, so that "the bride of the vanquished became the reward of the victor."

Here we have another story which is closely connected with the Biarkamal; that which it has in excess of the lay is a number of descriptions of the housecarls' mode of life. The scene remains the royal castle, the subject is the old established custom of the single combat. On the other hand, the wars with the Heathobards, which still showed quite plainly behind the descriptions of the lay, have completely disappeared from the story, which is gotten up for the very purpose of explaining events whose historical antecedents were no longer known.

It is difficult to say anything definite about the date of its origin. It shows the partiality for the court as a scene of action, which we know from the Hialti stories and which is seen in such episodes dealing with the warriors of Hrolf as are common to all Scandinavian tradition. However, one will have to be cautious in assigning to the story any very great age, at any rate in the form in which we have it, when one considers that it is not supported by Icelandic tradition, and notes that in the latter the bone throwing is used as an independent motif which, indeed, is rather preferable, poetically.\*

\* Cf. my characterization of the story in *Saksas oldh.*, ii, 152-153.

There is only one feature which occurs also in Icelandic tradition; the name of Biarki's sword. Its Danish form is *Løvi*; it appears as *Laufi* in the *Biarkarimur* and in the *Landnama*, dating from the beginning of the thirteenth century.\* The *Biarkamal*, however, names his sword differently; hence the name *Løvi* must belong to the prose traditions, most likely to the fight with Agnar in which it occurs, which is the only famous deed of Biarki otherwise recorded.

Proceeding cautiously, we may perhaps find our way to an older form of the Agnar story, than the intertwining of motifs as seen in Saxo. We have these three points to start from: (1) the bone throwing occurs in Icelandic tradition as an independent story, and this seems to have been the original state of affairs. (2) Agnar scarcely was a welcome suitor, to begin with, as the *Biarkamal* describes him as a dreaded enemy. (3) Biarki can scarcely be so unwelcome a suitor as he may appear in the story.

In the seventh book of Saxo there is, in the beginning of the history of the race of Sigaar, a legend which is presumably of Danish origin. King "Unguinus" in Gautland had a daughter named Sigruth. A viking chieftain of low birth, named Ebbe, sued for her hand and demanded half the realm as a dowry. The king sought advice from his friend Halfdan the Mountain-strong, King of Denmark. Halfdan told the king of the Gautar to make all preparations for the feast, and that he himself would come and settle the matter. Having disguised himself, he arrived in the hall on the evening

\* *Landnámna* (1900), p. 57, 180; cf. below, p. 362.

of the marriage. People who met him on the way were dismayed at seeing his gigantic figure. He entered the royal hall, and asked who occupied the high seat by the king's side. When Ebbi named himself as the king's new son-in-law Halfdan exclaimed that it was an unheard of insolence for him to lift his loutish hands to so noble a woman and challenged him to single combat before he should obtain King Unguin's daughter. Ebbi answered that trolls fought in the night, but men in the light of day; but Halfdan replied that the rays of the moon were good light for men. So they entered into the combat. Ebbi fell and thus lost the king's daughter.

The resemblance between the two stories lies in the bridegroom in both instances having to fight another warrior, in his being killed, and in the satisfaction with which each dwells on his fall. Assuming the original Biarki legend to be closely connected with the fight between Halfdan and Ebbi, the difficulties we met before resolve themselves easily: the theme of the bone throwing is separated from that of the duel; Agnar becomes the feared warrior who cannot be openly refused and who forces himself upon the princess; and the love of Biarki and Hrut is much more natural if he rescues her from the unwelcome suitor. However, I do not wish to stress this solution as certain.

A similar result might be obtained by comparing the Danish and the Icelandic accounts of the combat with Agnar. That is, the Icelandic text would have preserved the feature that showed Agnar as an enemy of Hrolf; the Danish account, that of the single combat; and both would agree in giving Biarki the princess Hrut (*Drífa*) as

a reward. But such a combination would be entirely unscientific. Icelandic tradition (above, p. 76), describes the conflict between Biarki and Agnar as an episode in a battle; it does not say a word about a single combat, neither has it the close connection with the king's hall and the daily life of the housecarls which is peculiar to this entire group of stories. The Danish and the Icelandic accounts are two entirely independent attempts to round out the scenes of the Biarkamal into a connected story. Remarkable it is, by the way, that the Danish version of Agnar's death was not able to reach Iceland as all the other related stories of heroes did. The reason may possibly be, that it is a later invention told at a time when another account of the fight with Agnar was current in Iceland. At any rate, it does not stand on a level with the other warrior scenes, either in imaginatively combining old customs with the Hrolf cycle, or in poetically individualizing them in dramatic episodes.

### 3. VIGGI

The two events in Vigg's life, his vow and the revenge for Hrolf's death, are reported quite similarly in Saxo's Danish tradition and the Icelandic versions — as is the case also with the other stories of Hrolf's heroes.\* I shall here reproduce Saxo's form as the best one.

\* The best Icelandic account is that of the *Skioldungasaga* where Vigg's (Vøgg's) vow begins the story of Hrolf (the lost original is replaced by *Snorri's Edda*, i, 392; *Arngrím*, c. 12, beg.; *Biarkarímur*, beg.; the revenge is told only in *Arngrím*, c. 13). Less satisfactory is *Hrólfssaga*, c. 42, where the vow is made during Hrolf's expedition to Upsala, and c. 52, end, where Vigg's revenge is only hinted at.

One day, a young swain whose name was Viggi entered the King's hall; he stood a long time, staring at Hrolf, then exclaimed that he had come to see the king whom people called the greatest in the North and had found only a little pole (*kraki*) in the high-seat. Hrolf straightway adopted this appellation as if it were an honorable epithet and gave Viggi a large gold ring as a present. Viggi now went about the hall, showing his ring-adorned right arm; but his left arm he held behind him. When Hrolf asked him why he did thus, he answered that his left arm was ashamed at being so poor in comparison with the other. The king thought this reply witty and gave Viggi a second ring to match the first. Then Viggi vowed solemnly that if Hrolf should fall in battle he would avenge him on his slayer.

About Viggi's fulfilment of his promise Saxo has the following account: When Hiarvarth had conquered, he had tables set in the hall and made a great banquet. After the drinking had begun he remarked how strange it was that not one of Hrolf's warriors had survived the battle; he praised them highly for their devotion to their master (all having sought death together with him) and regretted that not a single one was left to enter his service. Thereupon Viggi stepped forth, and Hiarvarth asked him whether he would serve him. Viggi assented, and Hiarvarth held out the blade of his sword for him to swear an oath of allegiance on. But Viggi prayed him extend the hilt, for thus did Hrolf always extend his sword to the housecarls. Viggi grasped the hilt and plunged the point into Hiarvarth's breast. Thus did he fulfill the vow he had given Hrolf.



Hiarvarth's followers rushed up to slay him; but he called out to them that he was little concerned about his own death now that he had avenged his lord. Thus did it happen that Hiarvarth on the same day won and lost the kingdom; for treason does never prosper. But the Zealanders brought an army together and cut down his Swedish men.

The *Skiöldungasaga* (in Arngrim's excerpt) relates the same with only slight differences: "Next day, Hiarvarth was proclaimed king by all the Danes, and the oath of allegiance was sworn him. It was custom that the king sate on his seat with a sword on his lap, and that the men one by one stepped forward, laid their hand on the sword and swore the oath. Then forward went, together with others, that Vøgg who had given the king his epithet; he was the only one of the king's men who had survived the last struggle. But when he layed his hand on the sword he seized the hilt, drew the sword out, and plunged it into King Hiarvarth's breast."

Of these two stories the first seems to have been invented, partly in explanation of the name *kraki*, partly — and chiefly — so that Viggi's vow should form the introduction to the other story dealing with his revenge. But what may be the origin of the deed itself, Viggi's revenge on Hiarvarth?

It is not possible, whether by external testimony or by internal evidence, to trace the story back further than the other warrior stories common to Scandinavian tradition. Apparently there is at least the possibility that it derives from very ancient times, that it may even be historical. But if that were the case, it would be diffi-

cult to explain why Viggi has not to a greater extent become one of the chief persons among the followers of Hrolf. Neither is it likely that the story existed when the Biarkamal was composed; for the lay contains not the slightest hint of any such revenge — the only reparation the death-doomed warriors can obtain for the fall of their king is the slaying of as many enemies as possible. Thus we are led to assume the same age for this as for the other stories; they are of considerable antiquity, but still of a later date than the Biarkamal.

Heroic poetry always has a fondness for creating an avenger of the great hero. Besides the general tendency, we have here also the ethical reason that he fell through treason. In accordance with poetic justice, punishment ought to follow immediately after the offence. One necessarily asked: what fate did Hiarvarth meet after having violated his oath of allegiance to Hrolf? The thought of ancient times about such a state of affairs is expressed in the lay of Helgi the Hunding-slayer\* in the curse which is hurled at Dag Hognason after he had killed his brother-in-law, Helgi:

Shall all the oaths  
ever bite thee  
which to Sigmund's son  
thou swarest of yore . . .

The boat shall budge not  
which beareth thee,  
a fair wind though  
do fill its sails!  
The steed shall run not  
on which thou ridest,

\* *Helgakviða Hund.* II, 29–31.

though fain thy foemen  
flee thou wouldest!

. . . . .

nor bite that sword  
which is swung by thee,  
but it sing o'er thyself  
and smite thee down.

The same thought occurs in the case of the Scandinavians in Russia who, in 944, made peace with the Greek emperor; they laid their bare swords, their shields, and ornaments on the ground before them and swore that whosoever violated this oath, him his own shield should not protect, and he should fall by his own sword. In fact, this thought underlies the general custom of the Teutonic race, that each man is to swear his oath with drawn sword in hand; in Denmark, this sword oath was known already during the Viking Period. It maintained itself in certain judicial procedures until the very end of the Middle Ages, and still longer in a few set forms.\* Besides having a religious force, there is also a poetic value in the conception that the perjurer was to be felled by his own sword; and in Danish heroic songs this motif is more prominent than in any other people's poetry. King Fengi gained the throne by murdering his brother and marrying his wife. Amleth (*Hamlet*), the son of the murdered king, pierces him with his own sword in bed, after having hung in its stead his own, which was not fit for use. Similarly also in the medieval

\* Svend Grundtvig, *De gotiske folks våbened* (*D. Videnskabernes selskabs oversigter*, 1870) esp. p. 91-96; an oath on the sword was required also of the "sande mænd" (jurymen) in southern Jutland (Mejborg, *Slesvigske bøndergårde* 111, note). The fundamental conception is common to the Teutonic and the Celtic races (*Revue Celtique*, ix, 144).

ballad of *The Woman Murderer*: the maiden ties the man, hands and feet, and then draws his gilded sword, "that had sir Ulver full well deserved." \* In Old Norse poetry the motif frequently assumes a religious character, as in the wretched deeds done with Tyrting, and Geirrøth's falling on his own sword through Othin's wrath.

But — as seen from the point of view of our story — who was to avenge Hrolf? He himself is the last of his race, and more distant relatives are not mentioned. The band of famous and faithful warriors about him have found their death close by him — at least, this is the conception of the Biarkamal. There is no other way out of the difficulty than to let some insignificant and overlooked young squire survive to carry out the retribution — the same thought which the elder Grundtvig expressed in his poetic restoration of the old Biarkamal, by saying that "the last spark" from the conflagration of Leire kills Hrolf's slayer. There were real examples at hand of devoted retainers who, in the face of certain death, attacked the slayer of their master.†

There is still another factor. In the stories of heroic kings, the great and excellent lord is usually followed by some very inconsequential king who by his very in-

\* Danmarks gamle Folkeviser, no. 183, A. Cf. Child, *Popular Ballads*, no. 2, intro.

† Thus Garibald, a chieftain of the Langobards, was killed in church (662) by a mannikin who in this fashion took revenge for the death of his master and relative Godebert; he was cut down at once by Garibald's followers (*Paulus Diaconus*, iv, c. 51). One of the "Birchlegs" who saw his King Eystein borne in dead before King Magnus, hewed with his axe at him, but only gave him a large wound, and was immediately pierced from all sides (*Heimskringla, Magnus Erlingsons saga*, c. 41; 1177 A.D.).

significance emphasizes the greatness of his predecessor. The insignificance of this successor is expressed, not only by his lower descent, but also by his ruling only for a very short time. Of Hiarvarth, Saxo relates that he won and lost the kingdom in one day. The *Skiöldungasaga* says that he was king for only six hours. Most sharply the thought is brought out by the *Leire Chronicle* which reports that he was king only from morning until prime.\* In the same manner Frothi the Peaceful was followed by the low-born Hiarni skald who speedily was thrust from the throne by Frothi's son. Similarly, in an Irish saga, Conchobar the far-famed king of Ulster, at his death hands over his kingdom to his faithful servant "Shorthair," who lives but half a day; whence the saying "as long as Shorthair's rule over Ulster" in order to designate a very short period of time.†

The account given in the *Leire Chronicle* of the death of Hiarvarth is especially interesting. After Hrolf's death, the Zealanders and his own army of Scanians proclaim him king; but he bears the title only "from morning till prime": then comes the sea king, Haki Hamundarson, Hagbarth's brother, who kills him and makes himself king. This story is certainly younger than Viggi's revenge and evidently borrowed from the *Sigar cycle*; but it shows very plainly that the important thing in the popular conception is not so much the person of the avenger as the thought of retribution expressed here by the brief time which elapses before dis-

\* "a mane usque ad primam," *SRD*, i, 226; prime, i.e., until nine o'clock; cf. Kalkar, *Ordbog over det ældre danske sprog*, iii, 510-511; sub. *prim, printid*.

† Jubainville, *Littérature Celtique*, v, 371; E. Hull, *The Cuchullin saga*, p. 269.

aster overtakes Hiarvarth. Translated into legendary history, this is to say that very probably the motif of Hiarvarth's death, after only half a day of dominion, is of greater age than the definitely named avenger and his particular deed.

So far we may get, in our understanding of the origin of the story, by help of those motifs alone which, from the standpoint of heroic poetry, naturally are the outcome of the thought of revenge when the great king has fallen by treason. This does not, however, explain the story of Viggi with respect to its most characteristic trait. For it is also linked to real life by the custom of swearing the oath of allegiance on the king's sword, a circumstance which is made use of in a remarkably spirited scene.

"In the olden times," says Saxo, "those who entered the company of the king's housecarls used to swear allegiance to him by laying their hand on (his) sword-hilt." To judge from this it might seem as if the custom had gone out of use in Saxo's time. But the oath on the king's bare sword, that is, just as Hiarvarth demands it of Viggi, is still met with in much later times. In Sweden, as we know, the Senate (*Riksråd*), the nobility, and the bishops as late as 1540 swear their oath of allegiance "on King Gustavus' bare sword"; in Denmark, the burgomaster of Flensburg in a printed work of the year 1765 declares himself proud of having sworn his oath of allegiance to the Danish king on a drawn sword.\*

\* S. Grundtvig, *De gotiske folks såbened*, 62-66. Even Saxo furnishes us indirect testimony for the custom still being common at his time, when he mentions Hiarvarth's demand of the oath on the drawn sword as something

The other custom — the one which Viggi declares was observed by Hrolf's warriors, and which Saxo confirms when he asserts it to be an old one — that is, swearing the oath on the king's sword hilt, is altogether unknown elsewhere; and it is doubtful whether it ever did exist. It looks much like a compromise between the housecarls' oath on the king's sword blade and the oath of allegiance common in those times, which was sworn with sword in hand; or perhaps it is mixed with the oath of fealty sworn by the vassal in receiving the king's sword and grasping it by the hilt.\* It is not impossible that such a mixed form really did exist at one time; but, as it happens, we know of it only as a poetic device in the story of Viggi. Saxo's vague expression that this was an old custom is certainly not to be adduced as testimony independent of the story.

A third form is found in the *Skiöldungasaga*: the king sits on his throne, with his sword on his knee, and his new subjects advance and make their oath on it; but when Vøgg approaches, he seizes the hilt, draws the sword and thrusts it into the king's breast. This was precisely the position of the sword when the Norwegian housecarls of the thirteenth century swore their oath of fealty to their king.

At this point I must call attention to the detailed description of the sword oath found in the Norwegian statutes of the king's men (*hirðskrá*) of about 1275, because it shows clearly the close connection between

self-evident. Only when there is the question of swearing the oath on the hilt does he explain that this was the custom in olden times.

\* Cf. Fritzner, *Oldn. ordbog*, iii, 619, sub *sverðtakari*.

Vøgg's deed and the conditions of real life: the king is to sit on his high seat, with his sword on his knees (the coronation sword, provided he has been crowned), its ferrule extending backwards under his arm, and its hilt reposing on his right knee; he is to wind sword clasp and sword belt about the hilt and is to take hold of all these with his right hand. He who intends to become king's man is to advance, kneel down, and with his right hand grasp the sword below the hilt; then kiss the king's hand and swear allegiance on the gospel. The remarkable thing about this ceremonial is that it renders it impossible for the one swearing to draw the sword from its sheath when standing before the king. But this means, of course, that misgivings were entertained of some one improving the chance to draw the sword and kill the king.

Not impossibly this fear was due to the old story of Hiarvarth's death; or else to certain events in historic times, even if they are not recorded in the sagas of the kings. It may also be that this fear may arise spontaneously among men devoted to their king, when they see some stranger who is not yet attached to him by association and solemn oath stand, sword in hand, before their unarmed leader. It will be easier for a fear of this kind, which is due to existing conditions, to arise and become fixed in a ceremonial, than for a mere story of the olden times to exert that influence. Anxiety must have existed, not only in the thirteenth century, or whenever the Norwegian ceremonial was settled, but in whatsoever times a stranger was seen with his hand on the king's sword.



In this apprehension of possible mischief we must see the origin of the story of Viggi; for it is true that in all popular poetry fear and hope are the very strongest stimulants to the creative imagination. The situation which recurred every time a new housecarl joined the king's men suddenly found expression in a new story, just as the drinking of bear's blood was practiced many a time by huntsmen before it crystallized in the story of young Hialti being roused to great deeds thereby. Thus the fear of some deed of violence during the ceremony of taking the oath of fealty was the flame under the crucible of folklore which caused the varied elements of a story of retribution to combine and form the complete picture of Viggi's revenge on the treacherous king.

We have seen, then, that the stories about Viggi, as well as the stories of the other heroes, originated in the conditions of life which really surrounded the housecarls. They also are confined to the circle of the king's men and to the court, and show the same joy in real life and the same zest in the description of the youthful hero, together with the same magnificent display of simple, strong action. To be sure, the story was not invented to supplement the epic allusions of the lay; and yet it is supported by the central idea of the Biarkamal: the glorification of king Hrolf for his boundless generosity (without real warlike exploits, as in the oldest tradition) and the housecarls' devotion unto death.\* Thus the Biarkamal dominates this entire cycle of

\* It is scarcely superfluous to add that this legend most likely arose within the Danish cycle of hero legends. In the Icelandic tradition Biarki advances to the foreground, and his brothers revenge both his and Hrolf's fall; but this legend is not very happy as compared with the story of Viggi as the true avenger of Hrolf.

stories. The skald broke the way with his enthusiastic description of the life of the housecarls in its great war-like aspects, the legend followed after and was able to see with newly awakened interest the poetic possibilities in all the daily conditions of life: the throwing of bones across the table, the bear hunt, the love affairs, the rules of single combat, and the ceremonial to be followed by the new housecarl in swearing his oath of allegiance. It is because the trunk of this poetic material is so sound that it can spread its branches so far.

#### 4. BIARKI AND BEOWULF ?

The opinions here advanced concerning the age and origins of the hero legends differ altogether from those entertained by all other investigators. To them these are myths from far-away prehistoric times. They have not, indeed, tried to furnish any general explanation concerning their origin; but they have attempted to establish some connection with diverse historic or mythical episodes in Beowulf.

In order to make a counter proof of my method it will be instructive to examine their lines of argument in order to see how near one may get to the characteristic points of these legends by their method.

All investigators, I believe, have been at one in asserting a connection between Biarki and Beowulf. In Biarki's fight with the winged monster by the king's hall (*Hrólfs saga*) they see a parallel both to Beowulf's fight with the ogre Grendel in the hall of the Danish king, and to his battle with the dragon. Adopting this similarity as their basis, most scholars have assumed the two heroes to be identical, and have made every

effort to render it likely that Beowulf (*Béaw*) really is the same name as Biarki or Bøthvar. Some of them (especially Müllenhoff and ten Brink) suppose that the two figures were blended in later times.

The ablest of them all, Müllenhoff, only hesitatingly, and with a bad conscience, brought himself to attribute to Biarki immemorial fights with dragons. With his clear vision for the inner nature of heroic poetry, he was fully aware that the story of the killing of the animal only had the purpose of making Hialti a hero. Moreover, he saw how untenable was a position which put trust in the testimony of the saga straight counter to Saxo's account; "this very young saga tries on the whole — in agreement with the later romantic taste — to give a troll and fairy story-like account" (*Beowulf*, p. 55). In this sentence, Müllenhoff himself has spoken the decisive word; but he was too much steeped in the theory of his times concerning the "mythical" elements of heroic poetry to venture to draw the necessary conclusion therefrom. Since his time, investigators have become even more strongly convinced that the details of a source may not be arbitrarily disassociated from the period and the range of ideas to which they belong. We know now that all the later Fornaldarsögur have undergone a similar shifting to more fantastic conceptions. When Saxo's bear turns up in the fourteenth century as a winged monster and "the worst troll," it exactly corresponds to the animal Hadding has killed by the shore (Saxo, book I), which changed in later Icelandic tradition to a fantastic monster with a man's head, and with tusks, claws, and a lizard's tail (*Saksnes oldhistorie*, ii, 4).

This was the status of the problem at the time when I first published the results of my investigation into the origin of the warrior stories. Since then the sources have settled the question.

The finding of the Biarkarimur, a few years ago, proved that the fight with just a beast of prey was not only Danish tradition, but also Icelandic; that is to say, the winged monster of the saga cannot prove its existence even as early as the classic period of Icelandic literature. From our present point of view, one may wonder at the modesty of the demands of earlier investigators for establishing proof of relationship: neither Beowulf's wrestling with the ogre in the hall or in the fen, nor his fight with the fiery dragon are essentially identical with anything in the Biarki story; but if one takes a little of them all one may indeed arrive at a sort of resemblance with the very latest and most inferior of these accounts.

Granting, with Müllenhoff, that Hialti's drinking of the blood is the most essential feature of the story, any attempt to determine the origin of the legend must chiefly concern itself with this motif. But if the contents of the entire story prove to be identical with a custom of hunters on bear hunts, then there are no other themes of obscure origin left, neither mythical fights with trolls nor any others. It only remains to be established whether the whole cycle of warriors' legends bears the same relation to events of real life as does the episode of the bear hunt.\*

\* I abstain from giving complete references to the voluminous literature of the Beowulf-Biarki question. They may be found, together with rather insufficient summaries of the various writers' views, in the recent study by

Biarki's single combat with Agnar has been compared with an old episode in the Scylding cycle, as told in *Beowulf*. Indeed, the English poem relates how Ingeld celebrated his marriage with Hrothgar's daughter Freawaru in order to put an end to the old feud among the two peoples; but how, at the very feast, manslaughter is committed in the hall and the feud flames up anew. Now, if Saxo's account be given the same background, then Hrut's marriage with Agnar Ingialdsson would indeed be closely parallel; that is, a marriage intended to allay the enmity between two warring peoples, and interrupted in the very hall of the feast, would be the result.

Again, this hypothesis suffers from the weakness that the similarity with *Beowulf* is found only in the younger source. The *Biarkamal* contains an account which is simpler, and the connection of which with the war against the Heathobards is clear; but there is not a word about marriage and reconciliation. What right have we then, to place the later account in the very oldest times? This is not necessary in order to explain its contents, for another explanation lies much nearer: the saga writer elaborates the brief hints of the *Biarkamal* and does so in the same style as the other stories

O. L. Olson, *The Relation of the Hrólfssaga Kraka and the Bjarkarímur to Beowulf* in *Publ. of the Society for the Advancement of Scand. Study*, iii, no. 1, 1916, pp. 7-60. He is in substantial accord with my views on the two essential points, viz., that the *Hrólfssaga* story is a later development from the legend as known to Saxo; and that there is no connection with *Beowulf*. He differs from me on a more detailed question in regarding the Rimur story as derived from the one in the saga. Although his investigations contain some valuable observations, I am not convinced that he has found the final solution of this problem.

about the housecarls. And what do we gain by thus, against all probability, transferring Saxo's account of a Danish story several centuries back and giving it a different connection, not even identity with an old legend, but rather a semi-repetition, or a kind of analogy? This is small gain indeed to reward such a long distance combination. How much simpler the explanation furnished so clearly by the age of the diverse sources: all stories about Hrolf's warriors are based upon the Biarkamal.

##### 5. THE NAMES OF HROLF'S WARRIORS

It is necessary to investigate the names of the most famous warriors; for the two groups of traditions, the Danish and the Icelandic, are not at one with regard to any of their names. We shall make a beginning with the two names which occur together in the Biarkamal.

Biarki is a man's name and can be traced during long periods of Danish history. It is seen to exist even before the Viking Period in the place names Birkinge in Zealand and Bierkeløff in South Jutland. Birkæruth, and probably also Byerkerp, in Zealand, dates from the Viking Period. In the twelfth century, a man named Berki is mentioned among the Danes in Northern England. As late as 1406 a farmer of Nørre-Tranders near Ålborg (Jutland) is called Anders Byærkessøn, and in 1490 we find one Birky Jenssen, a farmer in Høibjærg on the west coast of Sleswic. The name is seen also in Swedish place names and occurs in German as Berico, Pericho. There can be no doubt about its meaning: Biarki, Berico is a 'short-name' for one of the com-

pound names in “-biörn (-bear)” which are so common among the Teutonic tribes.\*

Hialti, on the other hand, cannot be shown to have been a Danish name. To be sure, the Bravalla Lay mentions one Hialti who is a warrior from Leire and a skald; but this is a mere reminiscence of the hero in the Biarkamal. There is hardly any use to look for him in a village name like Heltborg; for it is doubtful whether names compounded with -borg and -berg ever contain the name of persons. Does the name occur in Sweden? It is not to be found in Lundgren's *Personnamn*. “Does not exist in Norway,” says Rygh.† Nor is it found in Anglo-Saxon. Hence, not only Denmark but all the peoples bordering on it fail to acknowledge him as their own.

However, the name occurs in two widely separated places. In Langobardic and High German both the

\* *Birkinge* (now *Birkende*) in Løve district, Zealand, *Birkelou*, 1422, *Bierkeloff*, 1492, in the parish of Vodder, district Hvidding in North Zealand, *SRD*, viii, 73-81, v, 544, 565 (cf. Kok, *Danske folkesprog i Sønderjylland*, ii, 81); *Birkæruth*, Slesvic, *SRD*, register; *Byerkerp*, 1395; Erslev, *Danmarks breve fra middelalderen*, no. 4000-4001 now *Bjelkeruf*, Stævn's district, Zealand; *Berki*: the *Durham Liber Vitae*, cf. a few pages below; *Birky Jensen*, *SRD*, viii, 35; *Anders Byærkessøn*: Molbech og Petersen, *Udvalg af danske diplomater*, p. 251. Cf. O. Nielsen, *Olddanske personnavne*, p. 12 (*Biarchnes* has quite certainly nothing to do with *Biarki*, but means a “ness with birch-trees”). Lundgren, *Personnamn från medeltiden*, p. 27; Förstemann, *Altd. namenbuch*, i<sup>2</sup>, 260. Another interpretation of the name has been attempted by more recent investigators who set *Biarki* = *Biár*, *Beáw* (*Arkiw*, xix, 48). But it is entirely indefensible to interpret the name without consideration of the fact that many other men beside Hrolf's vassal bore it, or to disregard that in the very oldest source, the *Biarkamal*, he occurs in purely historic surroundings as a chieftain in Hrolf's fight against the king of the Heathobards, Ingiald. Also from a linguistic point of view this equation is very doubtful.

† Rygh, *Personnavne i norske stedsnavne*, p. 132. In Eyvind skaldaspil-lir's *Háleyggjatal* there do occur *Goðhialti* and *Veðrhialti* as Hakon jarl's oldest, i.e., fictitious, ancestors (*Vigfússon, Corpus poet. boreale*, ii, 570).

simple name (*Helzo*, *Hilzo*) and the corresponding compounds (*Hilziperga*, *Helzolt*, *Helzuvin*, etc., are found).<sup>\*</sup> The word for "sword hilt" must have come into use for the formation of names during the very oldest times and especially — it would seem — among the Suevic tribes. In Iceland the name *Hialti* occurs from about 900 down to the present. There cannot be any historic connection between the regions in which the name occurs. And it would be strange indeed if an Old Teutonic name could not be shown to have existed among the peoples between, and then to have gained favor suddenly in Iceland. Clearly, the Icelandic name must have a different origin; nor is it difficult to find. Quite certainly, it means a man from Hialtland, i. e., the Shetland Islands. During the period of the settling of Iceland, *Hialti* occurs both as a surname and as a given name. After the year 1000, the surname *Hialti* disappears, whereas it continues as a man's given name. In the same manner, one finds during the thirteenth to fourteenth centuries, side by side, the surname and given name *Hialtr*. The reason why the latter does not occur earlier than the thirteenth century is of course, that *Hialti* was used in the same sense as above, i. e., it designated a man from Hialtland. The use of these names *Hialti* and *Hialtr* is confined to Iceland and the other Western Islands. It arose from particular geographic conditions — the nearness of the Norse settlement on the Shetland Islands — and is, therefore, to be considered apart from the old Teutonic name.<sup>†</sup>

<sup>\*</sup> Förstemann, *loc. cit.*, i<sup>2</sup>, 843.

<sup>†</sup> The oldest examples are: *Oloifr hialti*, settler in the Borgafirth (*Landn.*, 140, line 5; *Egils.*, c. 29); *Eyvindr hialti* on Kialarnes, grandson of a settler



Hialti in the Biarkamal is, then, not the name of any real person, but was invented by a poet as a characteristic warrior's name, reminding one of "sword hilt," just as Old Danish and Old Norse *Skafti* reminds one of "spear shaft." It has nothing whatsoever to do with the Icelandic name Hialti; for even if it had been an Icelandic poet who had created this figure in the Scylding cycle, he would not have chosen a name reminding one so strongly of the Western Isles whose representative Hialti would then be. It is more likely that the poet who introduced the name into the Scylding cycle had heard it used among other Teutonic peoples, or had heard it mentioned in old lays. It is a common observation that names used by real persons among one people are regarded by another as poetic names; as, for example, that of the trouble maker Unferth in *Beowulf*, and German names like Adeliza, Ermelin, in Danish ballads of the Middle Ages.

The results thus gained from the investigation of the names quite agree, then, with what we have learned from a comparison of the texts. Hialti is a figure created by the poet of the Biarkamal, Biarki, a historic personage who acquired his fame in battle with the Heathobards.

from the Southern Isles (the Hebrides), (*Landn.*, 10-135); *Hialti sun þórðar skálps* came to Iceland and settled in the Hialtadal (*Landn.*, 67). Cf. *Landnámabók, register*; K. Rygh, *Norske og isl. tilnavne* (Trondhjem 1871): sub *Hialti og Hialtr*; *Sturlungasaga, register* (among them one *Hialtr* from the Orkneys); *Ljósvetningasaga*, c. 20, line 9, note, *Skýrslur um landshagi á Íslandi*, iv, 527 (22 persons in 1855); F. Jónsson (*Aarbøger*, 1907, p. 234) attempts to interpret the name as meaning "sword hialti (hilt)"; but this does not explain the close connection between *Hialtr* and *Hialti* both in place and time. I am, of course, far from denying that a knowledge of the *Hialti* of the lay may have had some influence in making the name a favorite in Iceland.

We shall now pass to the later monuments in order to understand the differences in the Danish and Icelandic forms of the names.

## SAXO

Biarco

Hialto

Wiggo

## SKJOLDUNGASAGA, ETC.

Bǫðvarr biarki

Hialti hinn hugprúði, Hǫttr

Vǫggr or Vǫggr.

All Icelandic sources take *Bǫðvarr* to be the real name, and *biarki*, the epithet; investigators have, as a rule, assumed that this is correct. However, the *Biarkamal* distinctly designates *Biarki* as the real name to which there is added an epithet praising him as a doughty warrior (*belligeri accepi cognomen*). Later Danish tradition, and the oldest Norwegian source, the *Bravalla Lay* (about 1066), know him only as *Biarki*.\* As we have just seen, this was a real name belonging to the great group of names in *-biörn*; also that it was old and that it was used in Denmark. On the other hand, it is not astonishing if Norwegians or Icelanders who did not know *Biarki* as a real name but only as an epithet (cf. *Rygh, Tilnavne*, p. 5) took *Bǫðvarr* to be his real name, and *biarki*, the epithet. They essay several mutually contradictory explanations of its origin. It is said to be connected with a sword sheath of birchbark (*Hrólfs* s. c. 31). Again we are told that it was given him on account of his bravery and sternness (*Hrólfs* s. c. 49, *Bjarkarímur*). The Icelanders conceive his real name to be *Bǫthvar*, which was a rather frequent man's name

\* Also in the *Málsháttakvæði* (stanza 7: *Biarki átti hugarkorn hart*) and in most passages of the *Biarkarímur* he appears under this name. Perhaps this is owing to its early use in metre, and also to an inclination to use the short name in preference to the full name.

in Norwegian and Icelandic, and one not unknown in Denmark. How he got it we do not know with certainty; but the most reasonable assumption is that Biarki's "epithet of the warlike" was \* *bǫðvar-Biarki* ("Biarki of the fight,") showing a formation parallel to *víga-Styrr*, *holmgöngu-Bersi*) and that it was understood as *Bǫðvarr biarki*.\*

The earliest occurrences of the name *Bǫðvarr biarki* are to be found in the Icelandic manuscripts from about 1200; but it is possible that the name occurs even earlier in northern England. In the *Liber Vitæ* of the church of Durham, in the handwriting of the twelfth century, there is a long list of friends and benefactors of the church. A large proportion of the names — on the first page, in fact, the great majority — is of Scandinavian origin. The following is a portion of this list: *Toki Brother Skupi Wlf Thurkil Toti Tosti Æskyl Botild Gunsten Osbern Thruwin Æskitil Riculf Æskyl Rikui BODUWAR BERKI Esel Petre Osbern Estret Liculf Osgod Thore Sure Thururc Eskil Estret Locchi*. When we find two persons entered side by side in the book bearing the names *Bǫðvarr* and *Biarki*, this would seem to point to names being given after Hrolf's famous champion.† The surrounding names and their phonetic representation indicate Danish and not Norwegian origin. In general it may be said that the entire long list contains but very

\* Thus Bugge *PBB*, xii, 57 (and Detter, *Arkiv*, xiii, 366 who, however, incorrectly says that this interpretation occurs in the *Hrólfs saga*).

† This does, of course, by no means exclude the possibility that *Boduwar Berki* is the name of only one person; epithets sometimes (though rarely) are written on another line. In Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Britonum* (lib. ix-x) there figures one Beduerus as King Arthur's cupbearer and duke of Normandy; but whether he has anything to do with King Hrolf is doubtful.

few names of a Norwegian aspect.\* In case there really is a naming after the hero, it would point to this double name having originated in North England, and most probably among the Danes who settled there.

In the Icelandic monuments Hialti has the epithet of *hinn hugprúði* †; but this must be of comparatively late origin, since the word *prúði* itself is a loanword from French borrowed by the western vikings at the beginning of the eleventh or, possibly, already in the tenth century.‡ When still young he is also called *Hǫttr*. According to the saga it is Hrolf kraki who presents him with his own sword, Gullinhialti, and bestows on him the name Hialti. But the name *Hǫttr* is found nowhere else (in the *Biarkarimur* it is only a kind of nickname by which he is known in Leire castle), and his being renamed Hialti is, quite certainly, only the invention of a saga man with which we may compare the despised *Urðarkǫttr* being renamed *Finnbogi* (*Finnbogasaga*).

Most curious, however, is the case of the name *Viggi* (by Saxo spelled *Viggo*), which is one well-known in Denmark. As late as 1662 there were some farmers in Horn parish on the island of Funen who bore the name of

\* *Askil* twice, *Hedne* (= *Heðinn*, but surrounded by purely English names). The preservation of umlaut and of *w* in *Boduwar* is hardly sufficient to prove Norwegian origin. *Liber Vitæ ecclesiæ Dunelmensis*, ed. Stevenson (London, 1841), p. 78 (discussed by Binz, *Zeugnisse zur altengl. Heldensage: PBB*, xx, 158). Concerning the date of the list it is well to note, also, that among the very first names are those of *Eiric rex Danorum* and of *Botild uxor ejus* († 1103). It is not impossible that some other names also may be those of Danes (or Norwegians) who were only slightly connected with the church of Durham; but the form *Boduwar* is certainly too old to belong to a Dane of the twelfth century.

† *Biarkarimur*, 5, 13 has (perhaps as a poetic license) *hjártaprúði*.

‡ Steenstrup, *Normannerne*, iii, 379; Rygh, *Tilnæmne*, p. 49.

Wegge and Wigge.\* Its origin seems to be quite simply a very natural abbreviation of *Víggeirr*, *Vígeirr*, or some similar form. It was not known in Norway and Iceland, however, and hence might easily have been replaced by a similar name. Thus we find in Icelandic tradition *Voggr* (also spelled *Voggr*, *Voggr*, and *Vavgr*) which resembles it, but is not known as the name of any person. A name *Voggr* existed, to be sure, as an epithet. One *þorðr vogguðr* or *voggr* lived in the ninth century; it seems to be connected with Old Norse *vagga* f. "cradle" and designates a man who rocks to and fro when walking (cf. Norwegian *vagg*, m. "stocky person with a rocking gait.") †

Another very interesting and apt explanation is given by Gudbrand Vigfusson (*Icelandic Dictionary*, 721). He conjectures that *voggr* (from the verb *at vagga*) originally meant a child in the cradle. In that case Hrolf would not end the episode by saying "a trifle makes *Vogg* glad," but: *lítlu verðr voggr feginn*, "trifles may amuse infants;" ‡ and the name of the young swain

\* *Rolls*, not yet printed. *Vegge* and *Vægge* as surnames of farmers on the island of Falster (Petersen, *Lollandsk-falstersk navnebog*, p. 75), probably in the seventeenth century or later, certainly is the same name. In Anglo-Saxon, *Vicga* is common.

† The name *Voggr* in the fantastic *Ásmundarsaga kappabana*, c. 7, is most likely borrowed from that of Hrolf's man. Still it is possible that Icel. *Voggr* represents an older form *Vøgggr*, unknown as a name but identical with Goth. *vadjus* "wedge," Finn. *vadja*, modern Dan. dialects *vægge* "wedge for splitting wood" (Funen and Zealand; cf. *Danm. Helteedigt.*, ii, 99): in which case the similarity in meaning with *Hialti* may have suggested its use in the Hrolf cycle. If correct, this form would then be of Danish origin, the word being unknown in Iceland and Norway. But the existence of a name *Vøgggr* is very doubtful, as it does not actually occur, and the presumable Danish form is found only in Icelandic sources.

‡ One may think of a number of other Scandinavian proverbs with the same thought: *Det er lidt der kan fornøje børn* (trifles may please babes), N. F. S.

would thus have been due to a misunderstanding. In Iceland, where *Voggr* was in use as an epithet, this change lay right at hand. Hence, if the *Skiöldungasaga* says that the words of the king later on became proverbial, it ought to be said on the contrary that the proverb is the original and that the name of the hero was shaped after it.

Thus all these favorite heroes of the circle of Hrolf have been renamed in Icelandic. Biarki's name is changed to the warlike *Bǫðvarr*, whilst in the young Hialti's childish prattle he is called by the pet name *Bǫkki*. Hialti's own name was too martial for an ashputtleson, and so he had to bear a home-made name as long as he sat in his heap of bones. Viggi's name was shortened to *Voggr*, which owed its associations to the proverb that "children are pleased by trifles."

Looking at the older names — those in the Danish texts — *Biarki*, *Hialti*, *Viggi*, we cannot help being struck by their all ending in -i, which closely corresponds to the predilection of the Danish Viking Period for short pet names in -i. This stands in strong contrast to the more frequent use, during the preceding period, of full names, generally of compound structure. There is a distinct difference between these three names and the great number of names preserved in the Scandinavian Runic monuments of prehistoric times, and in the line of the Scyldings and all the names in the world of North-

Grundvig, *Ordsprog*; *det er en ringe ting, som kan glæde et barn* (a small thing may please a child), *Videnskabernes selskabs ordbog*; *gærne bliver mudet barn mildt* "A child is easily pleased by a present," Peder Syv; *barnehånden er snart fyldt* (a child's hands are soon full) (H. Thomsen); Icel. *Ívilþæg eru börnin* "children are content with little," Vígfússon.

ern lore (Agnar, Ingiald; cf. the examples on p. 44 f.). The series Biarki, Hialti, Viggi would be exceedingly unlikely as the names of real persons in the period of the Migration of Nations, or as the names of fictitious personages of the olden times; but as names of the Viking Period they entirely agree with the taste of those times. How dependent the names of heroes were on the speech fashions of their times we can see when we compare the corresponding series in Icelandic tradition, *Bǫthvarr*, *Hialti*, *Vǫggr*. There the Danish characteristics are no longer present.

Again the study of the names agrees with the result obtained by the literary tests: the entire series belongs to the Viking Period; only a single name, that of *Bǫthvar biarki*, is older.\*

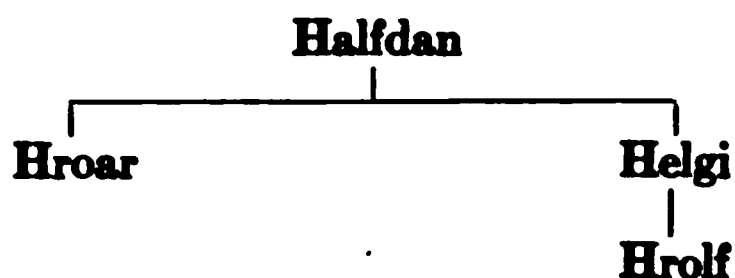
\* Of course there are also among the great number of full names, in the Runic inscriptions (whether of one or two syllables), a few abbreviated ones, such as *Niuuila*, *Mrla*; also the women's names *Finno*, *Hariso*. In the royal line, we find *Helgi*; which, however, stands apart from the general formation of names. There are no corresponding compound names, hence it is no pet name. On the names of the Viking Period, cf. *Dania*, v, 238.

## CHAPTER V

### LEGENDS CONCERNING THE RACE OF HALFDAN

#### 1. HELGI AND YRSA

**I**N the epic of Beowulf we find a complete knowledge of the history of the Scyldings, of Halfdan's many sons and grandsons; and the tradition has all indications of being historically reliable. Of this tradition, the later Danish and Icelandic monuments have preserved only the main lines in the following genealogy:



There is, then, some connection between the very oldest legends and the traditions which were committed to writing in the twelfth century and later. On the other hand, it cannot be denied that the most part of what Beowulf mentions was forgotten by the succeeding generations; and the new information which the later sources add, does not, as a rule, agree with the older account.

The greatest change occurs with regard to Helgi's whole position in the Scylding cycle. In Beowulf, he is merely mentioned in passing as the king's son who died early; but now he is the main personage in the first gen-



eration of the Scyldings, a characteristic heroic figure, full of love and hate, of courage, resourcefulness, and folly—at the same time victorious and hapless. Very probably there is little of historic truth in this strange royal career, but an all the more abundant growth of poetic motifs; in fact the luxuriant development of the Helgi legend envelops and eclipses the records of the other descendants of Halfdan.

Love is the central impulse in Helgi's restless life. In order to know him, we shall trace his career through the widely diverging accounts given by the different sources.

The most detailed version occurs in the Icelandic *Hrolfssaga* (c. 7–9 and 13); Queen Oluf of Saxland was “handsome of appearance, but haughty”; she was a warrior queen who went about with shield and coat of mail, girt with a sword and wearing a helmet. She was the best match of those times in all the North, but she would have no husband. Helgi conceived the desire to marry her, even against her own will. He arrived in Saxland with his fleet, and the queen, who did not have a sufficient force about her to make resistance, received him and his men as guests. In the evening, during the banquet, Helgi demanded that they should celebrate marriage at once. The queen was forced to consent; but Helgi was already dead drunk and when they went to bed she pricked him with the “sleep-thorn,” shaved off his hair and tarred his head, put him in a sack and let his own men carry him to his ship. When he awoke next day and wanted to avenge the insult, the queen had already collected a superior army of Saxons, and

Helgi had to sail away thus put to shame. Not long after, he returned in disguise, hid two chests of gold in the ground and, by the help of a thrall of the queen, lured her out alone to dig up the treasure. When she came to the place, she was seized by Helgi who kept her as his concubine. In due time she gave birth to a girl child whom she called Yrsa. She was given to cottagers to foster up, and passed as their child. When Yrsa was thirteen years old, Helgi came to the land "to learn tidings"; he met the lovely girl tending the cattle, led her home with him, and married her, notwithstanding her anxious forebodings. Queen Oluf did nothing to hinder the wedding; but when Yrsa had given birth to a son, called Hrolf, Oluf fared to Denmark and revealed to her daughter her origin and the incest she had committed. She took Yrsa home with her, and later married her to the Swedish King Athisl.

In the *Skiöldungasaga*, the story is told a little differently: Helgi comes to Saxland where King Geirthiof happens to be absent. Queen Oluf *hin ríka* (the powerful) has not enough men about her to make resistance; so she receives Helgi hospitably. During the banquet, he asks for her love, whereafter the story runs as above. One year later he returns and captures Queen Oluf, who happens to have left the castle with her maidens. A daughter Yrsa is born, and is married in time to King Athisl of Sweden. Helgi captures her on a viking expedition and marries her, notwithstanding his brother Hroar's warning admonition that he might see by her features that she was his relative. Queen Oluf receives news of this, but only after three years have passed does

she journey to Denmark, to reveal the incest to her daughter, and cause her to join Athisl again.\*

In the Danish sources we find an entirely different and much shorter account of Helgi's love adventures. The fullest version is given in the *Leire Chronicle*. According to this source, Helgi was a sea king who collected all sorts of evildoers about him and saw many lands in peace and war. It happened once that he put into harbor on the coast of the island Lolland, erected tents on the shore and rested there three days. He sent out his men to find him a beautiful woman and they led to him Thora, the daughter of the Earl Hrolf. Later on she gave birth to a daughter, Yrsa. Many years after, Helgi returned to the same harbor without remembering the occurrence, and ordered his men to bring him some maiden. Thus it happened that he married his own daughter, Yrsa. She had a son whom she called Hrolf after her mother's father. At their death, Thora, old Hrolf, and Helgi were interred in a mound on the island of Thorey (*Turø*) which is named after Thora. Hrolf grew up to be a splendid warrior, and Yrsa was married to King Athisl in Sweden.

Saxo dispatches the first part of the story with a single line: "On the island of Thorø he ravished a maiden, named Thora, and she gave birth to a daughter who was called Yrsa"; for Saxo knew the *Leire Chronicle* and presupposed a similar knowledge among his readers. His continuation of the story, however, is somewhat different: "When Helgi, later on, came to Thorø on

\* Arngrim, p. 113-114; in the *Ynglingasaga*, c. 28-29, the story is filled in with a detailed description (probably of literary origin) of how Athisl captures her in Saxland together with cattle and thralls.

one of his viking expeditions, Thora resolved to take revenge. She forced her daughter, now grown, to go down to the shore and lure Helgi to love; and her desire was fulfilled without his recognizing his own child." Hrolf's birth is briefly mentioned, and Saxo then passes on to other events in Helgi's life.

Comparing the Danish and the Icelandic traditions, the first half of the story is seen to show the greatest possible diversity, both as to names, scene, and the course of events. On the other hand the latter half, treating of Yrsa, is essentially the same in all versions: Helgi in the course of his viking expeditions returns to a coast where he had in earlier times, now forgotten, ravished a woman. He beholds Yrsa (his daughter) and marries her. According to Saxo, it is the woman whom he had earlier ravished who, for the sake of revenge, brings about the new love; according to Icelandic tradition she knows of it early enough that she might have prevented it, but fails to do so, for the incest is to be her revenge. She even waits three years so that the curse may fall also on the son who has been born.

Thus there are no features in common to the first half of the Danish and the Icelandic account, excepting those that lead up to the common ending. It will be to no purpose to search for remnants of one account in the other. They are branches from the same stem, and this stem is the Yrsa legend. Some will perhaps be of the opinion that one of the accounts must be an integral part of the story and has only accidentally been lost. But this possibility — in itself improbable and incomprehensible — is still further restricted by the fact that

we can get a clear opinion of all the various elements of which the legend is composed.

The Danish account of Thora is no independent invention. It is only the Yrsa motif in all its simplicity and nakedness, with the voluptuary king as its only characteristic feature. All the other features are but a filling in, a nationalization by means of well-known names, a new grandsire, "old Hrolf" (*Hrólf karl*), and chiefly of a localization to three mounds on the island of Turø on the southern coast of Funen. There seem to have existed three mounds named Helgi's mound, Hrolf's mound and, perhaps, a Thora's mound; and the filling in is probably derived from this local tradition.\* But this delight, not in giving a more perfect form, but in localizing legends, is precisely a characteristic of the medieval Danish handing down of ancient lore (*Saksø oldh.*, i, 25; ii, 304-305). A Hrolf, after whom Hrolf kraki is supposed to be named, is due to the method of naming of a later time and is entirely at variance with the naming of the real Scyldings. Thora is a name which is very common during the Viking Period and later; but in the older monuments we find no derivatives from

\* The Hrolf and the Helgi over whom mounds are said to have been erected on Turø cannot have been the famous Scylding kings; for in the period of the Migration of Nations this form of burial was not in use. On the other hand, they may possibly be historical personages of a later time. The name *þóra* seems to owe its origin to the name of the islands (*þórey*). There are, both in ancient and more recent times, a number of queens who are supposed to have given their names to places, as e.g., Hethe to the town of Hedeby, etc. Later traditions about some Thora on Thurø (Thiele, *Danm. folkesagn*, i, 7) deserve to be mentioned here, but are not connected directly with the legend in question. For that matter, the island certainly is not named after some queen Thora; for the numerous islands in various regions of the North, bearing the name of Thorø (*þórey*) undoubtedly mark dedication to the god Thor (cf. *Danske Studier*, 1910, p. 24).

Thor, and are suspicious whenever, at very rare times, they do occur in heroic poetry.

The Icelandic saga about Helgi's adventures with the Saxon queen, on the other hand, is designed to work out a problem the Icelandic story tellers set themselves, but which was unknown to the older heroic poetry, viz., to provide subsidiary motifs and preparations, so as to let the action slowly increase till it becomes the great catastrophe, and so to distribute light and shade, that the hero and his opponent each gets a proportionate amount of right and wrong on his side. It is just this the saga intends to do. Queen Oluf's cruelty to suitors furnishes the provocation for Helgi's attempt to outwit her, and only after her coarse practical joke on him, does he avenge himself by doing her the violence which provokes her still greater misdeed. The saga has thus saved its hero's honor as much as possible; but such a deflection betrays the late origin of the invention, for the middle shoot grows up straight. The main lines of Queen Oluf's character also point to no other art than that of the Icelandic saga men. The ruling virago, clad like a valkyria, and mocking her suitors until she is severely humbled, is a motif frequently employed by them. Especially characteristic is the trait which serves to lower our estimate of her. It is her avarice which brings her into Helgi's power.\* Each of the accounts that have come down to us has, then, gone its own way to invent a plausible previous history for Yrsa's birth.

\* *Saksnes oldh.* i, 52-54; cf. the earl's daughter *Hlögur* in *Stjórnu-Odda draumr*, ed. Vígfússon, p. 107 ff.).

The Icelandic description of Queen Oluf's ruse corresponds in the main to a fairy tale. A native version of it relates how a king's son journeyed about, depriving of their virginity all the daughters of surrounding tributary kings. One princess whom her father had kept in close confinement for this very reason, begged permission, nevertheless, to come to his reception. She apparently consents to the prince's wooing, but after he has gone to bed she gives him a sleeping potion, puts him into a chest, and bids his men not to open it until his father has received the treasure contained in it. Only then did the old king discover his son's humiliation. (The remainder of the story — the king's son's attempts to avenge himself and her cunning in escaping them — bears no particular resemblance to the Helgi legend.) \*

How easily a new legend may arise for filling in some given poetic situation, we may see in the several different accounts of Helgi's death after he has learned of his incest: (1) he falls on his sword (*Saxo*), (2) he hangs himself (*Chronicle of Ryd Abbey, SRD*, i, 151), (3) he conceives a disgust of home, goes on a viking expedition, and falls (*Saxo* and *Skiöldungasaga*), or (4) he goes on an expedition to fetch Yrsa back from Sweden and is treacherously slain by Athisl (*Hrólfs saga*).

But also by methods entirely different from that of the study of the story we will be led to the conclusion that Yrsa is a very ancient figure, whilst the two mothers assigned to her are of younger origin.

\* Rittershaus, *Die neuisländischen Volksmärchen* (1902), no. 49. The corresponding Faroese text (Jakobsen, *Færøske folkesagn og æventyr*, 1898, no. 31) combines her first ruse and his following attempt at revenge into one action.

The names Thora and Oluf were used in the Viking Period and in the Middle Ages, but are scarcely older. The names in Thor- are peculiar to Scandinavian, and not common to the Teutonic race. They are lacking also in the Runic monuments of the Migration Period and must have grown up during the Viking Age or about that time. Women's names in *-leif*, *-lof* are so rare in Anglo-Saxon and German that we cannot consider them to be common to Teutonic.\* *Yrsa*, on the other hand, is not found in Scandinavian monuments even in the very oldest times.† When the *Hrolfssaga* declares that the mother in her rage named the child after her dog, this scarcely deserves more credence than other explanations of names there given; still, it teaches us that the name *Yrsa* sounded strange and was considered unbecoming a queen. But going back to the period of the migration of nations, when the Scandinavian North (according to the testimony of the Runic monuments and the legends) had names of a more Pan-Germanic character, this name will be seen to suit much better. Among several German tribes is found the corresponding man's name *Ursio* and a number of related formations.

The correctness of this result is evidenced by a source not yet mentioned, but which is the oldest one referring to these events. It is the *Grottasǫngr*, "the Quern Song," that old lay which is preserved in Snorri's

\* Förstemann, *Ald. Namenbuch*, 2d ed., i, 997; E. Schroeder, *Die deutschen Personennamen* (1907), p. 13.

† To be sure, the name *Yrsa* was recently found scratched on a Danish tile from the Middle Ages (Wimmer, *Danske runemindermarker*, ii, 202); but it is scarcely certain whether or no it represents a person's name.



Edda and certainly was composed by a Norwegian in the tenth century. Here the enslaved giant-maidens grind calamities over King Frothi and (in the last verse of their song) also over his kinsmen:

Mólum enn framar,  
mun Yrsu sonr  
vígs Halfdanar  
hefna Fróða;

sá mun hennar  
heitinn verða  
burr ok bróðir;  
vitum báðar þat.

“ We grind still further: Yrsa’s son shall avenge Halfdan’s death on Frothi; he shall be called her son and her brother; that know we both.” Here, “ Yrsa’s son ” is designated as the one who was engendered by incest; his father has married his own daughter.

Let us examine more closely the conception of these events as shown in the poem (cf. below, p. 304 ff.). The main motif of it is, of course, that the powerful giant-maidens whom Frothi has compelled to grind gold on the magic quern when driven beyond their strength, grind misfortunes, first over him and then over his kinsmen. Against him, they grind forth warriors who are to destroy his peace and riches; then they grind on and ever stronger (*mólum enn framar*) and sing the verse just cited about his kinsmen. First is mentioned Halfdan’s death of which Frothi is guilty; it was fratricide, as is testified by all the sources — the first murder within the royal house. As a revenge for this deed, and as a continuation of the feud between the kinsmen, there follows Hrolf’s retribution for the death of his grandsire, Halfdan. But a greater space is given to the story of Hrolf’s birth than to any of these other events. Hrolf is “ Yrsa’s son ”; “ he shall be called her son and

brother; that know we both." This incest must be the climax of the curse and of the calamities which the giant-maidens send on Frothi and his race. We may continue this thought; "Yrsa's son" is to be the last of his race; the family cannot live on, thereafter.

Here we reach the very core of the Yrsa story, and it concerns Hrolf rather than Helgi. The hero king falls by an enemy unworthy of him; his power is broken and his race is extinguished. There must be some reason for this course of fate in which the evil is victorious and the good succumbs. Our forefathers made answer with all their ethieal earnest: there is some guilt in the fathers for which their children must atone. There is in this a note reminiscent of the seriousness of the Old Testament.

Yrsa is thus seen to be connected with Hrolf from the very beginning; and we are bound to ask — as in the case of so many other figures that belong with Hrolf in point of genealogy — whether she was a historical character or not, and what she stood for. We can hope to receive an answer only by going a roundabout way — by making an examination of her name. This name has a history of its own which is none the less remarkable for not yet having been recorded.

The name Yrsa is not met with in the North, nor is any name of the same stem; nor, in fact, any word at all related with it. This is equally true for the neighbors of the Scandinavians and the nations most closely related to them. The name is not known among the Anglo-Saxons; for it is only after the Norman Conquest that an Ursus, viscount of Gloucester, and an Urso,

viscount of Worcester, and others of the same name, are met with. It is not correct when the great English onomasticon tells us that the Englishman Spracling had a father called Ursus; for we know from Northern sources that this is merely a translation of Anglo-Saxon *bera* "bear." \* Just as unsuccessful are the attempts which have been made to establish the name Ursus as Gothic (fifth century); for, when consulting the source (Jordanes, *Getica*, c. 45), we shall find only a "miles Romanus," under the year 455. In Germany, however, a number of names are formed from this stem, both names of persons and of places derived from them; but in northern Germany we will search in vain for them.† Only the southernmost German tribes used these names. The place names show this very clearly; south of the Danube we note: Ursen, Ursingen, Ursilinga, Ursinpach, Ursinperg, Ursinhusum; west of the Rhine: Ursbach. Farther north there is only one solitary instance: Ursleve near Magdeburg.‡ Personal names of this stem are numerous in the old Fraternity books of St. Gallen in Switzerland, Reichenau in the Lake of Constance, Rheims and Erminon in northeastern France. In the following I give a list of those names which certainly are Teutonic. One will not fail to observe that the majority of them belong to boundary

\* Searle, *Onomasticon Anglosaxonicum* (1897), p. 470 and 581, cites the chronicler Florentius Wigornensis; cf. my study of Beorn Beresun in the *Arkiv*, xix, 218 ff.; Ellis, *Introduction to the Domesday-book*, ii (lists B and C).

† Thus not in Heyne, *Altniederdeutsche eigennamen aus dem 9. bis 11. Jh.* (Halle, 1867); neither have I found them in a number of volumes of the *Mon. Germ. Scriptores*.

‡ Förstemann, *loc. cit.* ii<sup>2</sup>, 1518. Possibly, some river names belong here; Ursela in Hesse and in Flanders, Ursena in Saxony.

regions or rather to regions where there has been a mixture of peoples.

Ursio, Frankish, frequent, earliest in the sixth century.

Ursing, South German.

Ursebert, South German of the eighth century (also Frankish);  
one Langobardic Ursipert filius Ursi, 808.

Ursitrude, Langobardic, eleventh century.

Ursiaud (i.e., Ursivald) Frankish, ninth century, Rheims.

Ursedramnus, Ursdram, Frankish and South German, eighth century.

Ursiman, Frankish, and South German, seventh century.

Ursemar, South German, eighth century. Ursmar, Frankish, frequent.

Ursald, Frankish, eighth century (also South German).

Ursulf, Frankish (and South German), ninth century.\*

But in the same countries we find a series of names that have a Romance look and which are in much more frequent use, such as: Ursus, Ursinus, Ursicinus, Ursatius, Ursinatus, and the corresponding South German women's names Ursa, Ursina, Ursicina. All these forms are to be explained, not as Teutonic forms, but as derived from the Latin *ursus*, "bear." Names of this kind are borne by Romans long before they occur in Germany and before Teutonic immigration into the Roman empire became a factor. Following are the oldest examples I have been able to find:†

Ursus, consul in the year 84 (Dio Cassius, 67. 3); about 100 (Statius, *Silvæ*, 2. 6); Miles Romanus, 455 (Jordanes, *Getica*, c. 45).

Ursinus, about 370, deacon in Rome (Oncken, *Weltgeschichte*, reg., ii).

\* Förstemann, *loc. cit.*, 3. Ursio, South German, is probably to be added but cannot be distinguished from Romance *Urso*, *Orso*, from Latin, *Ursus*.

† The author expresses his sincere thanks to his friend Dr. Sophus Larsen, director of the University Library, Copenhagen, for his kindly assistance in this investigation.

Ursicinus, *magister equitum*, 355 (Ammianus).

Ursatius, *magister officiorum*, 365 (Ammianus).

Urseius, Roman jurist.

Ursileius, Ursileo, Greek patrician (*Mon. Germ. Script.*, iii, 206, v, 53).

Hence the great German onomasticon is in error when it cites a number of names such as Urs, Ursin, Ursino, Ursicin, Ursat (i.e., \*Urshad) and Ursinat as Germanic. They are the Latin names Ursus, Ursinus, Ursicinus, etc., and the sources almost always write them with Latin endings. King Ursicinus of the Alemannians, who in 357 fought against Julianus near Strassburg, bore then, no Teutonic name but — like so many Teutonic chieftains in the border lands — a Latin one, and precisely the same as the *magister equitum* living then in the Roman Empire. These names formed with *ursus*, 'bear,' seem to have been especially attractive to the semi-Romanized peoples near the borders of the Empire. Many of them adopted such names as Ursus, Ursinus, etc. and, later, new derivatives were formed of which the last parts are Teutonic. But the latter were often confined to a single tribe and never were in such general favor as the purely Latin names.\* Thus the names in Urs- have a history of their own. They are a half barbaric, half Latin cultural element which invaded the Germanic border lands.

Assuming that there lived a princess of the Danish royal house about 500 A.D. whose name was Yrsa

\* The entire development may be seen in a typical instance among the Langobards, the nation which was the last to come under Roman influence. Among them, the name Ursus is frequent; but only one individual bears a Germanic derivative (Ursipert) — and his father was named Ursus. Likewise there is only one woman's name, Ursitrude. There was no further development.

(Runic, *Ursio*), her ancestry is not to be sought among Danes or other nations along the Baltic; but rather among one of the Teutonic tribes living on the borders of the Roman Empire. One would especially suppose her to be of Frankish origin; for among the Franks the names in Urs- are most frequent, and precisely the name corresponding to Yrsa (*Ursiō*), the man's name Ursio which is unknown elsewhere. In the earliest instance, it is borne by a Frankish chieftain who played a prominent part in the civil war of the sixth century, and who had his fortified castle in the neighborhood of Verdun. It is furthermore to be remembered that the Franks were the only tribe inhabiting the borderlands of the Empire whose intercourse with Denmark was fairly easy.

Testing this result, arrived at from the study of names, by the historic conditions of those times, we find that it is just in the beginning of the sixth century that the first contact of Danes and Franks took place. In the year 516 the "King of the Danes," Hagleik, undertook his viking expedition against the Hetvarii, who lived at the mouth of the Scheldt, and suffered a reverse at the hands of the Merovingians. There were some other conflicts of this nature later in the same century, but not after its end. Historic conditions such as these may easily have made a Frankish lady the wife of a Danish prince.

Comparing the legendary accounts with the results gained from a study of the linguistic data, we are compelled to reject both the Danish tradition which localizes Yrsa on the islands of Lolland or Turø, and the

Icelandic sagas which make her the daughter of the queen of the Saxons. Only one point on which there is unanimity between the two may be reconciled with these results: both relate that Helgi on his viking expedition came to a foreign coastland and captured the fair maiden as his bride. Still, one must be cautious about wrenching such a detail from its connections and asserting it to be historical. The only firm basis from which to start is gained by treating the name Yrsa as a piece of linguistic antiquity, just as was done before with Hrothgar, Hrothulf, and other names. Just as these names indicated a national system of poetic nomenclature, the name Yrsa points to a living connection during those times with more southern, Romanized peoples.

It is noteworthy that Yrsa's name has survived, whereas the names of the other queens from the real life of the race of the Scyldings are forgotten. The later Northern tradition yields one explanation of this fact: it is on account of the great misfortune in Helgi's life, his incest. However, the very oldest tradition suggests a more cogent explanation. As Beowulf has it Helgi died early, when Hrolf had reached only a tender age. According to Northern custom, the child which after its father's death grew up with its mother, was named for her. We must suppose that Hrolf was, at first, called not only Helgi's son, but also Yrsa's; and it is precisely this appellation *Yrsu sonr* which we find in the oldest lay about the Scyldings, the Quern Song.

Granting the above, there may be seen an impulse toward the formation of a legend in this very name. As

it was no longer remembered that Hrolf grew up fatherless, there was offered the opportunity for a more fairy tale-like explanation of this circumstance. The legend of Hrolf's mysterious birth seems to have arisen through his mother's name, just as the Danish earl Beorn Beresun of the Viking Period was said to have had a bear as parent, or as a number of legends are told about the origin of Conchobar, the great hero of the Irish, the one more incredible than the other, each of which explains in its own way why he carries as a surname his mother's name (Conchobar mac Nessa).

There is no reason to believe the story of Hrolf's birth, as being the result of incest, to be historical; for even a cursory examination of Old Norse and foreign hero legends will show that it is the greatest heroes only whose life stories somehow attract this motif.

Concerning Sinfiotli's birth, the Volsungasaga relates that Queen Signy, intending to have an avenger of her father's and her brothers' deaths, came in disguise to her brother Sigmund, lured him to love, and then gave birth to a son called Sinfiotli. She sent him out into the forest to join Sigmund; and when he was grown, both went to king Siggeir's hall and burned him within it. Only then does Signy reveal what share she has in the revenge: "I went into the wood to thee in a witch-wife's shape; and now behold, Sinfiotli is the son of thee and of me both! And therefore has he this so great hardihood and fierceness, in that he is the son both of Volsung's son and Volsung's daughter; and for this, and for naught else have I so wrought, that Siggeir might get his bane at last; and all these things have I



done that vengeance might fall on him, and that I too might not live long; and merrily will I die with King Siggeir, though I was naught merry to wed him." \* Here we see the heroic force of the incest demonstrated clearly. On the one hand the strength of the race is doubled, it produces the extraordinary hero who can perform the heaviest tasks. On the other, the incest signifies a rebellion against the laws of nature: Signy has *svá mikít til unnit* that she can do naught else but die thereafter. But Sinfiotli combines in his life both the extraordinary strength and the curse of his origin. He dies young, by the treason of his kinsman, and has no issue. We may also call to mind, and with good reason, that it is really he who forms the grand finale of the Volsungs, he with whom the race dies out; for Sigurth Fafnisbani must have come into the legend as his younger brother at a later time.

Cuchullin, the main hero of the largest Irish cycle, is also supposed to be the fruit of an incest. He is the son of King Conchobar's sister Dechtire; and there are a number of different traditions about his birth, one of them being that her own brother Conchobar is his father. To be sure, the Irish saga tellers of Christian times are at pains to get rid of the incest in various ways; but these very endeavors testify to the genuineness of the motif.

\* *Volsungasaga*, c. 7, 8, tr. Magnusson and Morris; this legend is found already in the beginning of the eleventh century in the *Helgakviða Hundingsbana*, i, 41: "Thou wast Siggeir's step-son" [as also in the Anglo-Saxon lay of *Signy's Lament*; cf. Schofield *Signy's lament*, (in *Publ. of the Mod. Lang. Assoc. of America*, xiii, 262 ff.), where the connection between Sinfiotli and Arthurian legend is pointed out].

The "saga about Cuchullin's birth" runs as follows: Dechtire and her fifty maidens disappeared. Three years later, the king one day saw a large flock of fowl on the plains. He chased them with his warriors all day, without being able to reach them, and when night fell, the fowl disappeared. The hunters had to seek shelter in a hut. Bricriu, one of the king's men, heard a noise (in a mound?); he followed the sound and came to a splendid dwelling. The owner and his wife bid him welcome and the woman discloses that she is Dechtire. It was she and her maidens who, in the shape of birds, had lured the king and his men after them. Bricriu returned to the hut, but reflecting that if Conchobar knew the true connection he would give too many of his treasures to ransom his sister, he told him only that he had seen a very beautiful woman. The king beheld her, and forthwith demanded his right as king of the land to lie with her. So far, it will be seen, the saga has prepared all for incest between brother and sister; but there it suddenly turns aside: the wife begs to be spared as she is with child, and the hour of birth at hand. But all the other Ulster warriors sleep each with a maiden. Next day there lay by Conchobar a new-born babe which he took to the castle and gave to all the warriors to foster up together.

In another saga about Cuchullin's birth, we are told that the unmarried Dechtire became pregnant. People believed it was Conchobar who had committed the deed while drunk; but it was the god Lug who had let himself be swallowed in the shape of a fly in order to be born to the world by her as the hero Cuchullin. As will be observed, Irish story telling is characterized, more than that of any other nation, by the retention of old features, even after they have lost their epic significance and have given way to a new motif,\* merely for the sake of furnishing more detail and local color.

The Britons, another Celtic nation, are represented by the hero Gawain, the oldest and most famous of

\* Jubainville, *Littérature Celtique*, v, 26-29, 38; Eleanor Hull, *The Cuchullin saga* (1898), p. 13-18; cf. Alfr. Nutt, *Celtic doctrine of rebirth* (= *Voyage of Bran*, ii, London, 1897), p. 39-46; *ibid.*, p. 174. Our attention is called to the possibility that the same is the case with the Loki figure in Irish mythology. Eochaid the fair: Eri, "Delbaeth's daughter" indulges in love with a young swain who later on reveals himself as Elotha, "Delbaeth's son" (still, in this case the mother seems to belong to the gods, the father to the giants).

Arthur's Knights of the Round Table. According to all accounts, he is the son of Arthur's sister; but in some he has also Arthur himself as father.\*

Finally, the same motif is seen in a fifth North European national epic. Roland, the most splendid champion in the circle of Charlemagne, the son of Charles' own sister, was (according to some traditions) born of an incestuous relation between her and the emperor.†

In all five stories, the child resulting from an incest grows up to be a magnificent hero; and in at least four of the instances, if not in all, becomes the greatest hero of his race; which is to say — in at least four of the cases — the greatest hero in the national poetry of the people in question.

On the other hand it is true that the race dies out with the child born of an incest. This is most clearly evident in the stories of Hrolf and Sinfiotli. Roland also dies young and unmarried; Gawain's life story does not contain the mention of a single woman, thus offering a great contrast to the other Arthurian heroes (the secretly born child attributed to him in medieval stories is believed by all investigators to be of late origin). Only Cuchullin makes an exception in marrying; but his family history contains a tragic event, the killing of his own secretly born child.

This conception of the extinction of the incestuous race may be followed still further. In the Greek myths centering about Thebes, Oedipus returns to his birth place and marries his own mother without recognizing

\* Cf. Schofield, *loc. cit.*, p. 284.

† Gaston Paris, *Histoire poétique de Charlemagne*, 433, 378 f. The same, *Vie de S. Gilles*, p. lxxv.

her: of his children, the two brothers kill each other in single combat, and their sister dies for their sake. — We may also mention the myth of the birth of Adonis. Myrrha, the daughter of the Syrian king, lures her father to love, unrecognized by him; when he discovers who she is he hurries after her to kill her. She is changed to a tree; he cuts down the tree, and there issues from it a child, the wonderfully beautiful Adonis.\*

This cycle of myths not only throws light on Hrólf's birth, but also furnishes the key to the origin of the legend. If the child born of incest is the most glorious, but also the last, member of his race, the opposite thought may occur to a poet: Hrólf being the greatest and the last of his race is, probably, also born from an incest. It is not inconceivable that, as is frequently the case in the formation of legends, there were also some accidental reasons which contributed to attract this motif into the Hrólf story — perhaps only some misunderstood expression of an old lay; but this cannot be proved, owing to the extreme brevity of the oldest sources.†

From the point of view we have thus gained we can understand the figure of Helgi in its historical develop-

\* Cf. also the story of the daughter who flees from her father's love (found as a hero legend in the late English *Vita Offæ*, and common in the fairy tales; see Cox, *Cinderella* [London, 1893], pp. xliii-lxvi).

† I may mention a possibility, to indicate what I mean. In Athisl's hall, Hrólf inquires whether one had ever before seen a mother who would not give her son food (Old Norse *matr*), or a sister who refused to sew for her brother. We may conjecture that this combination of alliterated expressions is older than the legend of Hrólf's birth, and that both "mother" and "daughter" were understood to refer to Yrsa; whereas the word "mother" only was intended for her, and the phrase with "sister" was added for the sake of rhythmical euphony. However, it is necessary to add that the saga passage in which the dictum is found, scarcely assures it a great age.

ment. In the tradition of Beowulf, Helgi is but one of the three sons of Halfdan. He dies early, and no great deed is associated with his name; for Hrolf never is reminded of his father or his exploits. In the song of Widsith, which dwells on the Danish realm only as governed by Hroar and Hrolf, nothing whatever is said about Helgi. We see the next stage in his development in the Scandinavian poetry of the Viking Period, represented by the Quern Song: Helgi's early disappearance must have the same cause as Hrolf's tragic fall; there must be crimes and guilt in the race; the legend of the incest arises; therewith is given a conception of Helgi which may be still further expanded. First of all we are told of his fatal love adventure; but the same characteristics may be developed in various directions, especially his restless movements from place to place which makes him fit for the rôle of sea king and roving warrior.

But before discussing the political aspects of Helgi's history we must examine more closely another of his love adventures.

## 2. THE BIRTH OF SKULD

The sources are unanimous on one point in Skuld's life; she is Hrolf's sister and is married to his earl, or subject king, Hiarvarth. It is she who out of envy eggs him on to attack his overlord treacherously. It is she who gives the cunning counsel to conceal weapons on the ships instead of bringing the tribute (according to the Danish sources); or to ask for two year's delay for the payment of the tribute (according to the Icelandic tradition). The only difference is that the Icelandic

from comes  
the Quern  
Song

sagas represent her as a sorceress who in the battle with Hrolf calls the dead to life again. Of this the Danish sources know nothing.

On the other hand there is the greatest diversity of opinion about her origin, the only point on which sources agree being that her ill-nature and treachery must, in one way or another, be inherited from her parents. The *Skiöldungasaga* relates that she is the daughter of Athisl and Yrsa. With this the *Leire Chronicle* agrees. Curiously enough, Saxo says nothing at all about her origin, mentioning her only as "Hrolf's sister." The *Hrolfssaga*, finally, contains the curious legend which relates how the treacherous Skuld is the fruit of the love of King Helgi with an elfin woman.

We see, then, that the same is true as with the story of Yrsa, namely, that the part of the legend which has to do with Hrolf is constant and certain; whereas that part which concerns the preceding generation is very uncertain. The agreements concern only the motivation of Skuld's evil nature, which each tradition manages in its own way. In other words, her function in Hrolf's history is old; but her birth is described in diverse ways in order to explain her later actions.

Only one of these accounts has really added to the depth of the legend. It is the story of Helgi and the elfin woman which we find in the Icelandic *Hrolfssaga*, a trifle modernized and confused, but still sufficiently clear to allow us to form a conception of the main motif: One Yule evening King Helgi was lying in his bed, when he heard somebody knock at the door. A storm was raging outside and he thought it unworthy

of a king to let some poor person stay out in the cold. He went to the door and opened it. There stood a miserable being in rags. He let her come in and get herself some straw and a bearskin to bed herself on the floor; but she complained of the cold and came to his bed and asked for room there. "Lie there by the bed board, it will not harm me," said the king and turned to the other side. A light was burning in the room, and after a little while the king looked over his shoulder toward her, when he beheld the most beautiful woman. She was clad in a silken garment. Helgi straightway approached her in love. In the morning, when she departed she said to Helgi: "Now I am with child by you; look for it next winter at the same time, in your boat house; but if you fail to do so, you will have to suffer for it." Helgi did not pay much attention to the warnings and the time passed without his thinking any more of the matter. Three years after, the king slept in the same house. At midnight three persons came riding up to it. One of them was a woman. She descended and placed a child in the doorway and said: "Your kinsmen shall pay for it that you did not as I told you; this is our daughter and her name is Skuld." Then they rode away and were seen no more; but Helgi comprehended that she was an elfin woman. He fostered the child and she soon gave signs of having a cruel disposition.

This is the story in its main lines. I omitted a feature, introduced into the legend by the saga writer, that the elfin woman is a transformed human being who is delivered by sleeping on a king's couch. This scene is invented to suit the taste of the late Middle Ages for the

deliverance of enchanted beings; and is, moreover — as much else of the saga teller's contributions — but poorly joined to the remainder of the narrative. Omitting this motif there is left a story which exhibits good Icelandic saga style of the same kind as most of what the saga tells about Helgi: it exhibits a keen appreciation of the circumstances and development of the action and shows a sense for its connection with the future fates of the race.

Only in one point does the action seem too trivial. The fact that Skuld becomes the fateful woman depends surely, not only on her not being adopted by her father at the proper time; but a cruel nature must be hers because of her origin. The scene between Helgi and the elfin woman very clearly is described as a seduction. The king is lured to love by the supernatural woman, and falls into her snare without resistance. For this reason the child of love becomes the bearer of calamity.

Thus the legend shows itself to be based on a large conception. Helgi's guilt lies in his insatiable lust. By it he brings a curse on his race; by it he falls into the power of a supernatural being. For the first time in the Hrolf cycle we see a dæmonic power foreign to the race. Individuals no longer are responsible for their own fates; an uncanny outer force has crept in which destroys the race. Skuld becomes the slayer of her brother and thereby destroys the family.

In this connection we cannot help thinking of *Helge*, the splendid poem of Adam Oehlenschläger \* (the father of Danish Romantic poetry) in which this thought functions as the central theme. We

\* *Helges Eventyr*, a cycle of romances (1814). Oehlenschläger's *Poetiske Værker* ed. Liebenberg, *Heltedigte og Sagaer*, vol. 2, p. 57.



marvel at the unerring precision with which the genius of the poet penetrated through the corruptions of the saga and arrived at an earlier and more genuine context. He did not allow himself to be hampered by the supposed transformation by a stepmother, nor by the trivial motivation of the catastrophe as caused by Helgi's neglect of the child, but went directly to the core of the matter: the calamities which assailed the Scylding race as soon as the king surrendered to the treacherous supernatural power.

With this thought as a basis, Oehlenschläger created a heroic mythology. The *alfkona* of the saga revealed herself to the poet as a mermaid with all the elemental power and capriciousness of the ocean. It was the finding of the infant in the boat house which pointed to the wild element. Accordingly, the witchery of the mermaid became the main force in the poem. She is loved and worshipped by the cruel Frothi, dear to the giants; and she vows to avenge his fall. She sows in Helgi's heart an unbridled love whose fruit is not only Skuld, born to plunge the race into ruin, but also the unrestrained desire which grows and which finally — by his marriage with his own daughter, cunningly brought about by the mermaid — becomes his downfall:

And no trace  
Is left of the race.  
With cunning shall lust, and with blood shall strife  
Avenge thy life,  
Thou giants' friend, Frothi. (p. 98).

In this poem, with its bold rhythms, the song of exultation of the mermaid when she has Helgi in her power, we are told of the fate of more than one king in days of yore. It is the giant-world which rises in all its power like a storm flood and rolls in to annihilate the world of men which stands under the protection of the bright gods.

There is something deep and genuinely Northern in this poem, and Oehlenschläger has most successfully reproduced the spirit of antiquity. This thought of an enormous and protracted struggle in which gods, heroes, and men are arrayed against the multitudes of the giant-world and which is fought, not only with the sword, but also with wiles and deceptions of many kinds, is precisely the conception of life prevailing among the ancient Scandinavians. In Oehlenschläger's source, the Icelandic *Hrólfs saga*, we see several

instances of it, as in Helgi's seduction by the mermaid, and in Frothi's use of sorcerers and black magic, which in the saga has a certain connection with his wickedness and fratricide. Oehlenschläger has thus elevated the motif of Skuld's birth to being the source of Helgi's ruin; and very properly so, for it is the function of the supernatural in the hero legend to point out a deeper and more intrinsic connection than the usual chain of causation. There is embodied, then, in the poem a fundamental Scandinavian conception; but it ought to be observed that this is not the thought which was determinative for the origin and development of the Scylding legends. The entire tradition of Saxo, which in nearly all cases proves to have most authority, has not a word about supernatural powers. All the persons there act according to their characters, which naturally produce the situation. The Danish tradition is plastic, though plain and localized. Just as little is there any hint in the Biarkamal that the battle is between giants and gods; only the human hero king is mentioned, who is to be protected whilst he lives, and to be glorified after death. In the Norn heroic poetry, to be sure, there falls a supernatural light again and again on the Scylding race. In the Quern Song we are able to point out the very thought of the poet. There, the creator of the poem himself makes the curse fall, not only upon Frothi, but on all his race. In the episode of Skuld's birth, we see another instance of supernatural influence, one more personal and legendary in nature. A third theme is found in Othin's later relations with Hrolf kraki. All these episodes are but sporadic beginnings and constitute no dominating idea. There is the seduction of the king by the elfin woman, but it has not been made to dominate his love life; for the Yrsa legend precedes it as the independent, unreligious pivotal point of his career. To begin with, the originally Danish Scylding cycle contained no supernatural elements, and for this reason all its main episodes offer a strong, though silent, resistance to the introduction of such. The mythical elements remain merely tendrils which, on Norn territory, luxuriantly grow about the trunk, but never become the central stock.

This, then, constitutes the distinction between the old Norn saga tellers and Oehlenschläger, the distinction between the creative poet and naïve tradition. Notwithstanding all the liberties the saga men may take with the material, they are dependent on the legends as

handed down from father to son; whereas the creative poet treats the material in sovereign fashion, prolonging the new lines with a boldness entirely his own. He is a newcomer in the hero legend, and his way thither leads him through the Eddas and the struggles between gods and giants. To us who investigate the history of the legend, it is important to observe the remarkable way in which he has developed its latent idea — precisely because our conception of the legend is bound to be different. We can see, now, which legendary motifs we can trace through the many shifting forms, and what evaluation of the persons is contained in each of these outline themes. We may see, for example, how little impulse for the development of the Scylding cycle is furnished by Skuld's supernatural birth, since so many of the best sources have it happen in a much simpler manner (she is the daughter of Athisl), or do not mention it at all.

The above results have been obtained by an examination of only the Norse legend about Helgi and the elfin woman. I shall now pass on to a comparison of it with foreign material.

On the island of Uist, one of the Hebrides, a Gaelic hero story existed which belongs to the cycle of Fionn and his companions. It treats of the manner in which “the daughter of the ruler of the sea” (*níghean rígh fo thuinn*, “the daughter of the king underneath the waves”) wins the love of one of the heroes.\* One evening the Fenians had sought shelter from rain and snowstorm in a hut. About midnight a creature of uncouth appearance knocked at Fionn's door. Her hair was hanging down to her feet, and she cried to Fionn to let her in under the border of his covering. Fionn raised up a corner of his cover and gazed at her; but

\* Campbell, *Popular tales of the West Highlands*, iii, 421 ff. (somewhat abbreviated here), cf. Maynadier, *The Wife of Bath's tale* (London 1901, Grimm Library, no. xiii), p. 21 note, containing information about somewhat older poetic treatment.

when he saw how ugly she was he bade her go away. She gave a scream and went away to Oisean, whom she asked to let her in under the border of his covering. There too she was rejected. Then she reached Diarmaid, and cried aloud to him to let her in.

Diarmaid lifted a fold of his covering, and saw her. "Thou art a strange, hideous creature. Thy hair is down to thy heels; but come in," said he. She came in under the border of his covering.

"Oh, Diarmaid," said she, "I have spent seven years travelling over ocean and sea, and of all that time I have not passed a night like this night, till thou hast let me in. Let me come in to the warmth of the fire."

"Come up," said Diarmaid.

When she came up, the people of the Finn began to flee, she was so hideous.

But she had not been long at the fire, before she sought to be under the warmth of the blanket together with Diarmaid.

"Thou art growing too bold," he said. "First thou didst ask to come under the border of the covering; then thou didst seek to come to the fire; and now thou seekest leave to come under the blanket with me; but come."

She went under the blanket and he turned a fold of it between them. She had not long been thus, when she gave a start, and when Diarmaid gazed at her, he saw the finest woman there ever was. He shouted out to the rest to come over where he was, and all the people of the Finn gazed on the sleeping woman.

A short time afterward she awoke, and said to him, "Art thou awake Diarmaid?"

"I am awake," said Diarmaid.

"Where wouldst thou rather that the very finest castle thou hast ever seen should be built?"

"Up above Beinn Eudainn, if I had my choice," said Diarmaid; and he slept, and she said no more to him.

Next morning there stood the most beautiful castle right before their eyes, and she accompanied him into it as his bride.

Hereupon the narrative passes on to fairy-tale motifs: she makes the condition that he must never remind her of her origin, and when he breaks his promise she disappears. After a toilsome journey he finds his way to the castle of the sea king and there saves her life.

The close of the fairy tale about Diarmaid evidently has very little to do with the Helgi legend, whereas they agree to a remarkable extent with regard to the crucial episode: the hero in the remote hut, the unknown, repulsive woman who knocks at the door, shiveringly begs to enter the hero's bed, and suddenly is transformed to a most beautiful woman who gives the hero her love.

There can be no doubt as to the close connection between the Norse and the Gaelic story. Already Child had called attention to this in his great work: "Every point of the Norse saga, excepting the stepmother's weird, is found in the Gaelic tale." \* This similarity is of considerable importance for the study of the Helgi legend, since it confirms the result we obtained through

\* Child, *English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, i, 297.

a study of its contents: the real action of the story is just this, that the supernatural woman wins the hero's love. The stepmother's curse and the deliverance from it is a new and disturbing motif. We also noted the characteristic feature that the elfin woman returns King Helgi's child in the boat shed. This is explained in the Gaelic story by the fact that she is "the daughter of the king under the waves"; the *alfkona* of the saga is understood to have her home in some fairy world in the sea.

The Gaelic story cannot be derived from the Norse. This is attested, for one thing, by its simpler action; besides, the matter is settled by the circumstance that both the near and more distant relatives of this story are found in the literatures of the British Islands. It is especially close to Irish hero stories (the earliest of which are preserved in MSS. of the tenth and eleventh centuries) in which the young hero who dares to share his couch with the witch beholds her ugliness transformed to radiant beauty, and at the same time is promised a kingdom. (In the Gaelic story, the magic castle plays the same rôle as the kingdom, being the elfin woman's reward for his friendliness.) A more distant relation we see in the Scottish ballad of *King Henry*, in which the hero is moved by fear to let the greedy giant woman share his couch, and in the morning finds her transformed into the most beautiful woman. With another ballad, "*The Marriage of Sir Gawain*," we come to the interesting treatments of this story by Chaucer and his contemporaries, in which the whole scene is formed as a solution of the riddle as to what women desire the

most; namely, to have their own way.\* Most of these versions interest us here but little. The only aspect in which they resemble the legend of Helgi concerns the same transition, or corruption, occurring now and then, especially in the later forms, by which the strange woman is understood to be transformed, and must be delivered by the embrace of the knight — just as in the *Hrolfssaga*. But a real connection exists only in the case of the Gaelic story; and through it, with Old Irish hero legends.

It is exceedingly interesting to note that the saga teller, wishing to introduce supernatural motifs into the history of the Scyldings, has recourse to Celtic heroic poetry, which is so rich in mythical elements. No less interesting is it to note the geographical connection: it is Scotland's islands or coastlands with its fairy world deep down in the sea ("the daughter of the king under the waves") whose hero legends serve as a transition form. Most probably, we have to think of the Scandinavian colonists on the Shetlands and the Orkneys as the conveyors of the story to Norse literature.

But no less noteworthy is the deep-seated difference between the Helgi story and its prototype. In all the Celtic-English myths, the love affairs with the strange woman opens up a fortunate career for the hero; in Scandinavian lore, her embrace becomes the origin of all the misfortunes of the race.† This is, indeed, a fre-

\* The whole cycle of stories about *The Loathly Lady* has been investigated thoroughly by Maynadier, *loc. cit.* He is not attentive, however, to the particular connection between the stories of Diarmaid and Helgi.

† This feature, viz., that a person's ill nature is explained by a supernatural origin, is found also in other hero stories. The Norn hero Starkath's strength,

quently recurring contrast: the Celtic hero world which unconcernedly plays about the magic castles of elfin land, as against Northern lore, both hero legends and ballads, where we are seized with a strange and eery feeling when entering into intercourse with the mysterious powers. We see the fatal connection with them in the Helgi story, and shall find it again, in a somewhat different form, in the myth of Frothi and his giant maidens.

### 3. HROAR, HELGI, AND HROEREK

All the medieval sources tell that when the two brothers Hroar and Helgi ascended the throne, the empire was divided between them in such wise that Hroar obtained the dominion over Denmark, whereas Helgi received the fleet; and that Hroar lived as a peace-loving monarch, whilst Helgi won victories by sea and land.

This conception of Hroar's unwarlike nature, which is so firmly rooted in the later traditions, is somewhat at variance with the oldest source of all, the lay of Widsith, which relates his victories over the Heathobards. The epic of Beowulf likewise indicates that a

ugliness, and deeds of ill nature, evidently are to be connected with the fact that his father was a giant who ravished a mortal woman. The same is true of the origin of the sons of Arngrim whose characteristics are, at first, strength and cruelty; and, later on, wickedness. (*Hervararsaga*, c. i). About the origin of Hogni of the Nibelung myth, we are told that an "elf" ravished queen Oda (*Þiðrekssaga*, c. 170); cf. the legends of the Merovingians as descended from a sea monster which ravished the queen of the Franks (Grimm, *Myt.*<sup>2</sup> 364). In the more historical legends of the Norwegian kings, Finnish parentage plays a similar rôle as the source of witchcraft and ill nature; thus Gunnhild Kingmother and likewise Harold Hairfair's son by Sniofrith; Harold's meeting with Sniofrith (*Ágrip*, p. 4 f.), is a scene of seduction with a good deal of the supernatural in it. In still other legends the father's being a beast of prey is only a source of great strength; cf. the many stories about the bear's son. The Russian hero Volga is the son of a dragon (Hapgood, *Epic Songs of Russia*, p. 23).



considerable part of his rule was passed in wars against these enemies of his realm. On the other hand, it is true that his warlike deeds do not interest the author of the epic, who prefers to describe the court and the building of the splendid royal hall "Heorot," and all the life which is displayed therein. In the epic, he is the peaceful old king — which circumstance, as we have noted, is in consonance with the English tradition ever recalling the young and warlike Hroðulf whenever Hroðgar appears (cf. above, p. 54 f.). Now, if this side of him has been emphasized so strongly by an old source, it is not to be wondered at that later tradition forgot about his victories over the Heathobards and thought of him only as the peace-loving monarch who stayed at home. Historically, this is a perversion of fact; but from the point of view of the hero legends, it is entirely justifiable that his strongest trait becomes his supreme characteristic, and that he is remembered only in connection with his palace.

One of the Danish sources connects him especially with Leire castle. In the *Leire Chronicle*, we are told that the royal residence had been founded already by the first king, Dan, but that it was Hroar who appointed it with great treasures.\* This information agrees with the description in *Beowulf* of the building of the royal hall and the splendid life at court. Here the *Leire Chronicle*, which rests upon local traditions, really seems to have preserved old memories which are forgotten elsewhere.

\* *SRD*, i, 224: *Patrem vero suum Dan colle apud Lethram tumularit Sialandie, ubi sedem regni pro eo pater constituit, quam ipse post eum divitiis multipliciis ditavit.*

Several Danish sources ascribe to Hroar the founding of the town of Roskilde near Leire, at the head of the Isefirth. Very possibly, this is the very story about the building of the hall Heorot or of Leire castle which in later times was transferred to a nearby locality. But, more probably, it is a later legend which owes its origin to attempts to interpret the name of the town.\*

Helgi gradually gains a better foothold in the poetic inventions. As father of the glorious Hrolf he was bound to play a great and noble rôle in the Danish royal house; but Hroar, as the memorable king in Leire or Roskilde, rather stood in his way. It would not do to let any new figure come in beside Hroar as his equal or superior; so the story made a place for Helgi in a different field, leaving the seat to Hroar.

There is in these hero legends a tendency not to let a person who is intimately connected with some motif or some locality be pushed from his position by a later legend. Generally the new story casts about to find some field not yet occupied, where it may strike root; with such success, at times, that it may overshadow the older legends. Once Helgi has obtained a position

\* One might suppose, both that the well by the Isefirth ("Ros-kilde") bears Hroar's name, and that he at the same time founded a city on this spot; for it would be the logical harbor for Leire Castle. But probability is against it. Seeing that all other accounts of Hroar have undergone such deep-going transformations in the course of popular tradition it is not likely that this one alone should have kept intact the story of some historic event. Neither does the legend of the founding of the city by Hroar point to any connection between Roskilde and Leire. On the contrary, the *Chronicle* tells us that it is a (Middle Zealand) town of Høgekøping which was moved to the Isefjord. Lastly, the town of Roskilde is not named after Hroar, as is proved by the Old Norse spelling *Hróiskilda* (earliest form) in a Skaldic poem of about 1050. The name is derived, not from Hroar (< *Hróthgar*), but from Old Danish *Hróir* (*Hróth-woer*); cf. Wimmer, *Danske runemindermarker*, iv, p. ix.

beside Hroar, the same force which bore him up, viz., the poetic interest in him as Hrolf's father, shows a tendency steadily to urge him forward. There are any number of possibilities in him as a warlike sea king; deeds will be associated with his name and the story will especially incline to scenes which will, in an epic manner, demonstrate the relation of the brothers to one another. We find such a scene in the account of Hroar's fall and of Helgi's vengeance. But we have it in so many different versions, with such diversities in names and circumstances, that few will observe the essential likeness.

1. *Danish tradition in the second book of Saxo.* "Eager to extend his dominions," the Swedish King Hothbrodd went on a warlike expedition into the Baltic countries; he then turned against Denmark, where he attacked king Hroar (*Roe*), fought three battles with him, and finally slew him. When Roe's brother Helgi heard of it—he is to be imagined as scouring the seas—he put his little son Hrolf in safety in Leire castle; he then had his men kill the chieftains set over the land by Hothbrodd, and "in a naval battle slew Hothbrodd and all his men," from which exploit he received the epithet of Hothbrodd's slayer, just as he before had received the name of Hunding's slayer. Then Sweden is made subject to Denmark.

2. *Norwegian account in Saxo's seventh book.* Here the story has considerably more detail. Other names are used instead of Helgi and Hroar. The story begins with the brothers Harold (the elder) and Frothi, who are to divide the kingdom between them in such wise that they are alternately to govern the realm and to command the

fleet. But Frothi kills his brother and persecutes his two young nephews, Halfdan (i.e., Helgi) and Harold (i.e., Hroar) who are saved by supernatural means and afterwards burn their father's brother in his hall. After they have won the kingdom, Halfdan (Helgi) rules three years as king, whereupon he hands over the realm to his brother and goes three years on viking expeditions "to Øland and the other Swedish islands." He makes an expedition into Sweden and slays the old king of the land. Then he fights against the latter's nephew Eric, the son of King Frothi who had been burned in his hall. (The story describes two battles and an episode of Halfdan's flight; but they are of no real significance in the action.) Suddenly King Eric attacks King Harold (i.e., Hroar) in Denmark, is victorious in three battles and slays him in a fourth. But when Halfdan (Helgi) hears of this he returns and pursues King Eric with his fleet. By a ruse he captures King Eric's ship and the king himself, alive. Harold offers him the choice between being his slave or being fettered and exposed to the wild animals of the forest, Eric chooses the latter, and thus finds his death.

3. *The Icelandic Hrólfs saga* begins with a similar story about Frothi's fratricide and the revenge of the young princes; but this episode is not of the same direct significance, Helgi's and Hroar's foe being, not a son of Frothi, but the son of their sister. Hrok, we are told, was the son of their sister Signy and Earl Regin (subordinate characters in the first part of the saga just mentioned). He demanded either a third part of the kingdom, or the precious ring which Hroar possessed.

As both were denied him, he asked at least to be shown the ring, which he then threw from his ship into the sea. As punishment for this, Hroar ordered his foot cut off; but Hrok waited for an opportunity for revenge, made a descent upon Hroar and slew him. He desired to marry the widow, but she knew how to draw out the time until Helgi approached and overcame Hrok. Helgi captured him living and commanded that he should be punished with worse than death; his arms and legs were crushed and he was sent home a cripple. Later, the queen gave birth to a son who was called Agnar. He soon became a great warrior. He questioned people closely about the ring his father Hroar had owned, dove down, and fetched it up at the third attempt. He often went on viking expeditions, and became the greatest warrior ever known. What became of him later on the saga writer has forgot to tell us; but this lack is made good by the *Skiöldungasaga* which gives an account of his attempt to win Hrolf's kingdom and of his fall.

4. *The Icelandic Skiöldungasaga*, as known, (A) from Arngrim's extract, and (B) from the *Biarkarimur*. The envious brother is here called Ingiald. He slays his brother Halfdan and plots against Helgi and Hroar, but is himself killed by his brother's sons. Ingiald has two sons, Frothi and Hrcerek (with the epithet *slaunga-baugi* in B) who are born to him by Sigrith, the widow of his brother Halfdan; besides, he has a son Agnar who is illegitimate (according to B), or the son of the daughter of Sverting whom he has put away (A). We are but incompletely informed of Hrcerek's later fate. (B) tells how he comes on board Hroar's ship, is shown the ring,

and hurls it into the sea with the exclamation that no one shall rejoice in its possession. The brothers have him maimed, and he sails home in that condition — “and died soon after,” as we are told. (A), on the other hand, informs us that Helgi fell on some expedition and that “Hroar was slain soon after by his cousins, the Ingialdssons, Hroerek and Frothi.” Afterwards, Hroerek is mentioned as king of a part of Denmark after Hrolf’s death; but nothing is said about Frothi.\* Agnar’s story is given in detail by (B), but only hinted at in (A). Agnar Ingialdsson grows up to be a mighty warrior; he collects ships and crosses the Baltic to Denmark in order to demand it as his inheritance. On the coast of Jutland he visits the harbor where Ingiald’s ring, Sviagris, had been thrown into the water and fetches it up from a depth of 80 fathoms. From Jutland he sails to Zealand. Spies from his dragon ship meet Biarki and Hialti, who challenge them to fight next day. The battle is fought on the ness of Zealand, Agnar fells five warriors with every blow. In his danger, Hrolf summons Biarki, who attacks Agnar in the guise of a polar bear, Agnar strikes a blow at his brow, but Biarki stands before him in human shape and pierces him with his sword, Laufi. Agnar dies laughing. The king gives Biarki twelve estates and his daughter; he himself takes the ring Sviagris, which he sends as a present to his mother, Yrsa.

Thus the story has grown into a rather extensive saga. In the Danish tradition we saw it confined to one

\* (B) mentions him at the accession of Hrolf to the throne. He must be the “Ingialdson” whom Hrolf compels to be satisfied with a fourth part of the realm.

generation; in Norway it had grown to two, and in Iceland even to three. Nevertheless, there is one central epic theme: a stranger king attacks Hroar in his kingdom and slays him, Helgi returns and avenges his death in a victorious battle. On this point all traditions are agreed, the Danish, the Norwegian, and the Icelandic (as handed down in the *Hrolfssaga*). The *Skioldungasaga* (*Arngrim and the Biarkarimur*) differ in mentioning only the first half of the story, dealing with Hroar's fall; but this saga does not represent any tradition, being, rather, the attempt of a critical historian to combine the saga tradition with the prevailing genealogy of the kings which lets Hroerek follow after Hrolf.

It is by far more more difficult to ascertain the name of Hroar's slayer; for in our four sources he bears as many different names. We shall, then, first of all attack the problem in the Norwegian-Icelandic group. Here, he occurs as Eirik, Hroerek, Hrok. Of these, Hroerek surely is the correct one. In the first place, this name is the simplest denominator among the three; furthermore it yields a more natural explanation of the origin of the two others: in the one source, Hroerek was replaced by Hrok, a name much better known in Iceland; in the other, it was transformed to Eirik as being a name better suiting a Swedish king. In the second place, Hrok by the evidence of the story itself, betrays itself as corrupted from Hroerek, because the story of the precious ring hurled into the sea is told about both Hrok and Hroerek and arose, in all likelihood, as an explanation of the epithet *slongvanbaugi*. Finally, the name of Hroerek is well established in the *Scylding*

traditions, and agrees with the method of naming of that time; whereas Hrok is known otherwise only as a Norwegian name, and his genealogy as given in the saga goes counter to the old method of naming.

It is not difficult to make out the legendary motifs which in later times were grouped about this kernel of Hroerek's slaying of Hroar, and Helgi's revenge therefor. Only in Iceland, Agnar's war against Hrolf belongs to this cycle of stories. The episode is fashioned on the well-known episode in the Biarkamal as a basis. Its connection with Hroerek is but weak, for the ring which is fetched up from the bottom of the sea does not play any rôle in Agnar's life; and as to the Skioldunga-saga (not the Hrolfssaga) identifying it with the ring Sviagris, which is cast away later on the Fyre Plains, this combination is far-fetched and labored. A story of somewhat greater age, known in Norway and Iceland, and more natural in its structure, is Frothi's fratricide and the revenge of his two nephews; this story will be investigated in detail later. Finally, there is the episode dealing with Hroerek himself. One half is the story of the ring hurled into the sea. Only in Iceland is it a part of the larger account; whereas in Denmark it is told as a separate legend. There, the king, throws rings from his ship to the chosen champion as a reward, but they fall into the sea, whence the epithet of *slænganbøghi*. The late origin of this story is evident from the fact that it is invented in order to explain the king's epithet; whereas in the Biarkamal we find an older and more correct understanding of the name. The other part, and the real kernel of the story,



deals with Hroar's fall and the revenge for him, which we find again in Denmark, Norway, and Iceland.

In order to understand the origin of this story about Hrœrek we must evidently refer to a time considerably earlier than the twelfth century, which is the date of our earliest manuscript sources; for these have been amplified and changed in many ways. But how far back shall we go? It does not agree with the very oldest form of the legend, for in it Hrœrek cannot be Hroar's enemy and slayer, since he is his son. And Helgi cannot be the avenger of his brother, for he died long before him. But if we content ourselves with making it contemporary with the Biarkamal, we shall find at least the first part (Hroar's fall) to fit, if not the story of Helgi's revenge. And we suddenly obtain insight into the curious development of this legend, whereby Hrœrek, from being Hroar's son, is changed into his bitterest enemy. In the very oldest form of the story, Hroar's feeble son is deprived of the throne by his ambitious cousin Hrolf. The Biarkamal still presupposes this circumstance, but is silent about that part of the story which is discreditable to Hrolf. Later, when the course of events was known only through the Biarkamal, and all had been forgotten excepting that the miserable Hrœrek was slain by Hrolf, the deed was explained by Hrœrek having treacherously slain Hroar; thus Hrolf's victory became an honorable deed of revenge, such as might be expected of the glorious king. Finally, there was a third step: the story was not told any longer as necessarily connected with the Biarkamal, but independently; and it thus became subject to

the same laws as other prose narratives, with the result that the figure of Helgi became more prominent. He was the very person to avenge Hroar, and opportunity was thus given to ascribe to him a warlike exploit corresponding to the personal interest the saga teller felt in him. The story developed still further; the cruel form of revenge of which we are told in the Norwegian and Icelandic sources (where the captive is maimed or thrown a prey to wild beasts) fits not only Hroerek's misdeed, but also Helgi's wild nature. At this stage, the story of Hroerek's fall reached such independence and fullness that it became the central action of the legend. It was possible to add to it episodes that went before (the story of Frothi), and to prolong it into the next generation (Agnar).

A different development is seen in Saxo's Danish tradition. There, Helgi has the epithet of "Hunding's and Hothbrodd's slayer," and the king who overcomes Hroar is not called Hroerek, but Hothbrodd. This is a later development, as is shown clearly by our being able to trace the course of the Hroerek motif as far as the Biarkamal and still further back to the English epics. On the Helgi Hundings-slayer legend we have the interesting investigations of Sophus Bugge,\* which shed new light on several points and especially prove that Saxo's information was based on an Old Danish lay in which Hler, "Eska," and Ægir were mentioned as chieftains in Helgi Hundingsbani's kingdom. Bugge is of the opinion that the Danish tradition about the Scylding

\* *Helgedigtene*, p. 139-184 = pp. 144-196 of the English translation by Schofield.

Helgi was fused with elements of the lay about Helgi Hundingsbani just mentioned. Also, that the figure of Helgi Hundingsbani himself has for its historical basis the same person as the Scylding Helgi; again, that the supposed lay received impulses from the cycle of the Scylding Helgi.\* The proof of this last point seems to me less cogent; at any rate, only certain details are accounted for which point in this direction, but do not explain how the development assumed corresponds to the main features of the story.

This combination with Helgi Hundingsbani is in no wise an elaboration of the hero's character or a fuller account of his fate; it merely provides Helgi with the military exploits which the father of the great hero king and the warlike brother of Hroar must needs have to his credit.

#### 4. THE CHILDHOOD OF HELGI AND HROAR

What most served to render the story of the Scyldings a favorite among many, in our century no less than in the times when sagas were told, was the story about the king's two young sons, Hroar and Helgi, who are compelled to hide from the murderer of their father and the usurper of the throne, their father's own brother Frothi; and who, after a number of adventures on the solitary island, finally see their chance to carry out their revenge in the very palace and ascend the throne. A most glorious beginning for the shifting fates of the famous royal race! On the following pages we shall investigate the origin of this story.

\* *Ibid.*, p. 150; English tr., p. 156.

The earliest account is that of a Norwegian saga of the twelfth century with which Saxo begins his seventh book; the most beautiful, that of the Icelandic Hrolfs-saga. We have still another version, though brief and chronicle-like, in the Icelandic Skíoldungasaga, in which the murderer is called Ingiald, instead of Frothi.

These accounts, however, belong more strictly to the countries of the saga tellers, Norway and Iceland. In Denmark the story is not known; in fact, Saxo and Sven Aggison agree in giving a precisely contradictory account, according to which it is Halfdan who slays his brother Frothi, or both his brothers, in order to win the throne.\* It is hardly likely that the Danish tradition should have partly corrupted, partly forgotten, a more genuine Norwegian tradition; for the story about the king's persecuted sons is as easy to remember as a fairy tale, and can scarcely be forgotten once it has been heard.

The very oldest account, as contained in Beowulf, also mentions Halfdan's and Frothi's fight for the kingdom; but there is this difference, that the one is king of the Danes, the other, king of the Heathobards, so that the fight really is waged between these two peoples. It would seem that Frothi fell in this struggle (several scholars interpret the passage in this sense); at any rate, the connection would scarcely permit the passage to

\* Sven, c. i: *Qui regni post se reliquit heredes, Frothi videlicet et Haldanum. Successu temporum fratribus super regni ambitione inter se decertantibus, Hal-dan fratre suo interempto regni monarchiam obtinuit; Saxo, p. 80: Haldano, Roe et Scato filiis relictis. His, virtute paribus, æqua regnandi incessit aviditas . . . Horum maximus Haldanus, Roe et Scato fratribus interfectis . . . regnum parricidio carpsit, et ne ullum crudelitatis exemplum omitteret, comprehensos eorum fautores prius vinculorum pœna coercuit, mox suspendio consumpsit.*

mean that Halfdan fell in the fight against Frothi. In so far, then, this oldest form stands most close to the later Danish tradition and farther from the Norwegian account.

As the fratricide is told both in Saxo and Sven Aggeson, it is without connection and, we may even say, without meaning. It exerts no epic influence on the life of the Scyldings, and neither Halfdan nor his race experience any retribution. For very good reasons, Saxo wonders about the cruel slayer being permitted to die a peaceful death in old age; for this is quite counter to the spirit of heroic poetry. A partial explanation is found in the older form of the story: the struggle between the brothers arose from the ancient hostility between the Danes and the Heathobards. At the same time an epic link is missing. In the next generation of the Scylding race we find the motif — which may claim considerable age — that Hroerek attacks and slays Hroar; very certainly, Hroerek was understood to be Frothi's son and avenger, not only in Norwegian but also in Danish tradition.

The characteristic Norwegian form of the story arose, accordingly, by reversing the fratricide. It is a story whose development is exactly parallel to the one in which Hroerek was made Hroar's slayer; the final result is that the family of the hero is cleared of all guilt. The next stage consisted in the elaboration of this new situation by adding the motif of the persecuted sons of Halfdan, and their revenge. We possess an old source which shows that the development really covered these two stages. The Quern Song ends with a prophecy that

“Yrsa’s son [Hrolf] will avenge Halfdan’s death on Frothi.” As this lay seems to have been composed by a Norwegian during the tenth century, we can make out no less than four stages in the development of the legend, with approximate dates:

1. The Danish King Halfdan struggles with Frothi, the king of the Heathobards, and presumably kills him (Beowulf).

2. The Scylding Halfdan wars against his brother Frothi to obtain the kingdom and slays him (Danish accounts).

3. The Scylding Frothi attacks and kills (his brother) Halfdan; his grandson Hrolf avenges the death (Quern Song, tenth century, Norwegian).

4. The Scylding Frothi attacks his brother Halfdan and kills him; Hroar and Helgi, the latter’s sons, save themselves and finally accomplish their revenge (Norwegian and Icelandic saga of the twelfth, thirteenth, fourteenth centuries).

Accordingly, the story of Helgi’s and Hroar’s childhood must have originated sometime between 1000 (950) and 1100, most likely nearer to the earlier date.\*

\* The very first evidence of the story is found in the so-called *Völuspá in skamma*, where we read: *eru sölur allar frá Viðolfi*. This sire of all witches is identical with the sorcerer Vit[h]olfus in Saxo’s Norwegian saga; and, seeing that the list of sorcerers contained in this poem mentions well-known mythical figures — such as Heiðr in the *Völuspá*, Hrossbjófr in Saxo’s Norwegian *Baldermyth* — we may also in *Viðolf* detect an allusion to some definite legend, i.e., to this Norwegian story of the Scyldings. Unfortunately, we are not able to determine the exact date of the composition of this poem. It was written after the introduction of Christianity and became a supplement to the *Völuspa*, doubtless after the latter poem had been enlarged with the list of dwarfs. (Jónsson (*Oldn. lit. hist.*, i, 204) believes it to be Icelandic, composed in the second half of the twelfth century.)

Even more important than the exact date is the nature of this change. We may witness here the most characteristic change in the development of heroic poetry: the transition from the scattered short stories which accompany and explain in greater detail the heroic lays, to the saga which gives an independent and continuous account of the hero's life. Precisely in the case of the stories about the Scyldings this transition was bound to be decisive. Halfdan's death being the first stage in the history of the race, one could not possibly avoid showing clearly and fully what its consequences were. It was a matter of course that Frothi would attempt to remove Halfdan's two sons also; and thereby stories were suggested about foster fathers and friends who tried to hide them away. As to Helgi and Hroar, the only way they could gain the throne was through a struggle for it; and this furnishes the suggestion for the story about their revenge on Frothi.

Some few features in this development the saga man has, of course, obtained from the wealth of traditions at his disposal. A long time ago scholars noticed that some important features are borrowed from the story of *Amleth*, the young prince who saves his life by feigned madness, after his uncle has gained the throne through the murder of his brother. In the very oldest form of our story, the Norwegian saga, the king's two sons feign madness and thus obtain the chance to fire the hall. The younger Icelandic text preserves as the only feature of their pretended madness that Helgi — like *Amleth* — seats himself backwards on his horse. That the Helgi story really is the borrower, and the old

Jutish Amleth myth the original, follows from the weak reflection of the feigned madness in our saga, as compared with the story of Amleth which is altogether based on it; and this motif is in itself so important that the fugitive allusion cannot be the original. The chronology of the two stories confirms this conclusion, the very earliest date of the Helgi story being about 1000, whereas the story of Amleth had already in the tenth and eleventh century, from its home in Jutland, spread as far as Iceland. The suggestion to borrow from this story lay near, for both stories start in the same way: the envious brother who kills the king and usurps the throne.\* But, taken as a whole, the story of Helgi and Hroar certainly is quite different from the characteristic Amleth type. It is but the common theme of the king's sons who are persecuted but able to conceal themselves in humble circumstances until they return to take their revenge. There are parallels to it in a great number of stories, among which also the Norse Sigurth Fafnisbani legend may be mentioned, though not prominently.† Among stories closely resembling the one of Helgi and Hroar, we may mention that of Romulus and Remus, and the corresponding Greek twins of Thebes, Thessaly,

\* F. Dettmer to whom we owe the first and thorough treatment of this question (" *Die Hamletsaga*," *Zeitschrift für d. Alt.*, xxxvi) tries to show (p. 7-13) that the Helgisaga as a whole is based on the Amleth story. But his attempts to identify the various motifs are arbitrary; and he fails to consider that fratricide is found also in other and older forms of the Scylding myths which contain no revenge by the sons. On the Amleth story cf. also Jiriczek, *Hamlet in Iran* (*Zeitschrift des Vereins für Volkskunde*, 1900) and the author's article, *Amlethagnet på Island* (*Arkiv*, xv, 360 ff).

† Cf. Hahn, *Sagwissenschaftliche studien* (1876), p. 340, table; Nutt, *The Arian expulsion-and-return formula in the folk- and hero-tales of the Celts* (*Folk-lore record*, 1881).



and Arcadia; but in the story of Helgi we have no great heroic features, such as the marvellous (divine) birth, and the suckling by the bitch or she-wolf. Instead, the *Helgisaga* moves in a more realistic world which corresponds to its youth. Granting some extraneous influence on its origin, it must have been one that left no very marked impression on it. It is, rather, to be assumed that the subject of the story has sufficient germinating power to renew itself every time the young hero grows up after the death of his father. The motif lies so near at hand, is so altogether natural to a hero, that the sagas of the Scyldings, when growing in popular tradition, were bound to begin with that feature, as a device for indicating the hero.

In a recent study by O. L. Olson (see above, p. 250; pp. 68-81) it is shown by this investigator that certain legends of north England furnished the prototype for the Hroar-Helgi story. There is some slight relation with the legend of *Havelok the Dane*, but a very close one indeed with *Meriadoc*. The gist of the latter is as follows. King Caradoc is murdered by his brother Griffith. The children of the slain king are fostered by the royal huntsman Ivor and his wife Morven. The executioners of Griffith had been commanded to hang the children on a tree, but had felt compassion, and had tied them by a slender rope, easily broken, so that they might fall to the ground unharmed. Ivor and his wife set out to free them. They kindle fires in the four quarters of the forest and smoke out the king's men from a hollow tree in which they had taken refuge (cf. the hollow oak in Saxo's story). Ivor kills them (cf. King Frothi's death by being suffocated in an underground passage by the smoke of his burning hall). Then Ivor and Morven lead the boy and the girl to a cave in the Eagle Rock (cf. Vifil and his "earth-hut"). Kay, King Arthur's seneschal, carries off the boy Meriadoc from Ivor, while Urien, King of Scotland, carries off the girl Orwen and marries her. Later, Urien joins Meriadoc in taking revenge on Griffith (cf. Sævil jarl as the brother-in-law and powerful helper of Helgi and Hroar).

The story of Macbeth also offers similarities; the usurper, the two king's sons who flee and return for their revenge; Macbeth consults the witches (as does Frothi a *seiðkona*) about them and receives first a favorable, then an unfavorable, answer.

As to the age of these legends, it is not far removed from the time when we must assume the Hroar-Helgi story to have arisen. The historical occurrences which lie at the bottom of the Havelok story took place about 950; the Meriadoc story was influenced by it; and the time of Macbeth is about 1050. It seems reasonable, then, to assume a connection. To be sure, the proof for the greater age of the Cymric-English tales is not absolutely compelling, seeing that, in the matter of treatment, the Northern stories appear superior in their greater firmness of texture, whereas the British stories are replete with irrelevant details. However, this is peculiar to all English-Celtic legends. Possibly the material at hand was fused to greater advantage by Northern saga tellers.

Attention must also be called to the fact that Northern material was at times borrowed by English story tellers. Thus (cf. Olson, l.c., p. 69) *Frodas*, the usurper in the *Historia regis Waldei* undoubtedly bears the name of Frothi in the Helgi-Hroar story. Consequently, influence in this direction is not altogether impossible in the case of the above mentioned legends.

Nevertheless it would appear to me that the Helgi-Hroar story does have the flavor of English-Celtic tradition, both in its very material and the imaginative treatment of it, even though I am not able to offer altogether satisfactory reasons for my opinion.

##### 5. HROLF'S VISIT TO ATHISL

Whilst medieval traditions have a great deal to tell about Hroar and Helgi, and much about the warriors of Hrolf, there is but one event in which Hrolf himself is the chief personage. This is his expedition to Upsala.

In Saxo's Danish version it is told as follows: Hrolf has married his mother Yrsa to the Swedish king, Athisl. But when Yrsa discovers how avaricious her husband is she watches for an opportunity to escape

from him. She persuades Athisl to believe that she hates her own son, and calls upon him to lure Hrolf to Sweden by the promise of gifts and then slay him. Her real purpose is that he shall take her away together with all the treasure he can lay hands on. So Hrolf is invited. He enters the king's hall, but his mother apparently fails to recognize him. He asks for food, but she bids him go to the king; he shows her his garments torn on the journey and asks her to mend them, but she refuses. Then Hrolf lifts up his voice and cries that "it is hard to discover a friendship that is firm and true when a mother refuses her son a meal, and a sister refuses to sew for a brother." \* During the meal Hrolf is seated at Yrsa's side. Athisl makes the remark that it is little seemly that brother and sister sit together at table; but Hrolf answers that it is right for a mother to receive her son lovingly; nor could anything be said against that. Then follows good cheer in the hall. The guests ask of Hrolf which virtue he values most highly, and he answers, fortitude. When they ask Athisl which he would choose, his reply is, generosity. Then the people demand that proof be made by both of their virtue. Hrolf is tested first. He is placed before the fire. When the heat becomes too great, he holds his shield before him on the side which is hottest, but then the heat burns him on the other, the unprotected side. A handmaid who stands near the hearth has pity on him and pulls the bung from the ale vat, so that the drink flows into the fire and subdues its heat in the nick of

\* S. 84 *cum filio mater epulum, fratri soror suendi obsequium neget* (note the alliteration: *móðir* — *matr*, *systir* — *sýja*).

time. All praise Hrolf's endurance. They then demand that Athisl show his generosity. Thereupon he presents his stepson with a whole heap of treasures and finally adds a huge ring.

After the third day of the banquet, Hrolf and Yrsa flee together in the dawn, taking Athisl's treasures with them on wagons. The Swedes pursue them; but, in order to delay them, she strews gold along the way; \* and when Athisl sees his own precious ring lying among the treasures, he kneels down to pick it up. Then Hrolf mocks him because he grovels on the ground in his greediness for the treasure he himself had given away. Hrolf thus gains time to reach his ships, and hurries back to Denmark.

We have also the Icelandic tradition about the expedition to Upsala, as preserved in Snorri's Edda (i, 394, an excerpt of the older *Skiöldungasaga*); by Arngrim (in his excerpt of the younger *Skiöldungasaga*); and in the *Hrolfssaga*, where it is given in much detail. Here also the two main points are how Hrolf saves himself from the fire (he jumps over it with his berserkers), and how he strews out the gold on his flight; but there are noticeable differences in the details. For the first, Yrsa's intrigue is altogether lacking, nor does she accompany her son on his flight. In fact, this seems a later addition even in the Danish account. Without it, the story is simply that Athisl invites Hrolf to visit him, in order to have an opportunity to kill him — a motif which is not very infrequent in heroic legend. On the

\* There are some, says Saxo, who relate that she kept the gold and strewed but gilt copper on their way.

other hand it seems a poor makeshift to have Yrsa lure her son into great danger in order to escape herself; not to mention the circumstance that the stealing of Athisl's treasures is altogether unnecessary, seeing that Hrolf already has the gold which he is to strew on his way. Still, too late a date must not be assigned to Yrsa's stratagem, since Hrolf's alliterating remark about a mother who will not give her son meat, and a sister who will not sew for her brother, does bear the stamp of antiquity. The change is one of the many attempts to transfer the story from Hrolf kraki to the older generation about which there cluster fewer tales.

Disregarding Yrsa's intrigue, the Danish tradition must be regarded as probably on the whole the oldest version of the story. Athisl's invitation of Hrolf is the natural introduction, as the story afterwards — even in the Danish account — seems to indicate his attempt to make away with his stepson. Besides, it corresponds to well known motifs in the heroic lays, e.g., in the Norwegian Lay of Half, which has borrowed from the Hrolf kraki story. King Half is induced by his brother-in-law, King Asmund's, promise of gifts, to visit him; whereupon Asmund burns him and his warriors in the hall. In the Volsung cycle, likewise, King Atli tempts his brothers-in-law by promises of gifts, and has them killed. Similarly, in the same cycle, King Siggeir slays his brothers-in-law. Compared with these, the Icelandic introductory motif, that Hrolf's warriors are to be rewarded for their services to Athisl, is both artificial and unheroic. We shall have occasion to see, later,

how and from where it was introduced into the Icelandic story of the Scyldings.

Also with regard to the episode of the fire, the Icelandic tradition must be the younger, for the very reason that it contains the splendidly plastic feature of the warriors casting their shields on the fire and vaulting over it. Such a scene is not easily forgotten, once it has been heard. The Danish story, on the other hand, excels in good epic motivation; the fiery test follows naturally from the introductory replies as to which virtue is valued most highly.

Still more essential it is, however, to reduce, if possible, the story to a form older than any one of the accounts handed down to us. We observe that the last part, dealing with the flight over the Fyre Plains, is shared by the various versions in all details; moreover, this is the motif which can be traced farthest back in the evidence of the sources: it is mentioned in the *Biarkamal* and its inner characteristics entitle it to be considered as contemporary with the older and more historic form of the story, as compared with the first part dealing with the fiery trial in King Athisl's hall. This episode is clearly without historic basis. By all indications it belongs to the stories of the housecarls in the Danish royal court. Here we find the same choice of the royal hall as scene of the story, as well as the same ability to observe the poetic side of daily life in the castle. As to the conversation between the two kings about which quality they value most highly, it reminds one of Olaf the Saint and his men who "choose accomplishments" (*Flatey-*

*arbók*, ii, 295); but the handmaid by the ale vat is still more close to everyday life.\*

As to the story of the fiery ordeal itself, it is evidently added to satisfy the poetic exigency of some great deed which may be attributed to Hrolf. The diverse accounts vie with each other in glorifying him, and at this point the story provided him with the exploits whose lack must be felt in the *Biarkamal*. We have here the same case as with Hialti, whose life was supplied with deeds from the stories about housecarls. It resembles Hialti's case also in this respect that the younger themes give more fullness to the events alluded to in the lay. To the expedition to Upsala is added an episode redounding to the honor of Hrolf; and Athisl's plotting against him is a sort of echo of the motif which is seen already in Hiarvárth's treason.

The story shows only slight influence from the stereotype scenes of the hero tales. The only borrowing is the figure of the evil-minded king who lures his brother-in-law into his power in order to destroy him; but the difference is that in this case the hero does not perish, but escapes unscathed because of his fortitude, his "patience," † as the story has it. This, then, is an altogether

\* This last episode recalls the passage in the *Halfssaga* (c. viii) in which we are told how Queen Hild saves King Hiorleif's life by pouring beer into the fire. Notice how much closer the Danish account with its slave woman is to every day life. Of course, the similarity may be due to the *Halfssaga* having lifted this motif from the story of Hrolf (Danish form of Hrolf's expedition to Upsala) — as it does in other instances. Neither is it impossible that both stories independently took this motif from everyday life. — As to the Icelandic form — where Hrolf and his warriors leap over the fire — cf. p. 356 f.

† There is one other instance in the legendary lore of the Teutonic nations of "patience" extolled as the most distinctive characteristic: it is found in one of the oldest Ostrogothic heroes (*Ostrogotha patientia enituit*); indeed, he

new motif in the description of character which is not borrowed from the active heroes of traditional poetry, but owes its origin, just as its setting, to an ability to transform the occurrences of real life into material for hero legends.

The figure of Hrolf underwent a strange transformation in the course of time. In the very oldest tradition we are told of his warlike exploits against the Heathobards. In the Biarkamal, he passes over into the figure of the ideally generous king whose deeds in war are not mentioned. Lastly, in the common Scandinavian prose tradition, he is furnished new exploits or, rather, one new, characteristic exploit. When the warriors in Athisl's hall make mention of their accomplishments, he indicates fortitude or patience as the manly quality he prizes most highly. In this, Hrolf has become individualized among the heroes of Teutonic lore. In a time when strength, boldness, and generosity are considered the chiefest qualities, he chooses for himself a virtue which is less brilliant but as valuable. Each people unconsciously invests its most splendid heroes with a great many of its own characteristics. Achilles exhibits clearly the Hellenic worship of youthful

also disappears soon in the story to make room for more active figures. With greater plausibility one may emphasize the patience of the famous Dietrich von Bern (*Theodoric*) who in an exile of long duration maintains his courage unshaken, and finally regains his kingdom. His union of mildness and strength in the portrayal of the Nibelungenlied (as pointed out by Andr. Heusler in *Hoops, Reallexicon der german. Altertumskunde*, i, 467) corresponds to the more cursory description of these qualities in the Hrolf legend just as his rôle as a king of warriors resembles that of Hrolf. Dietrich's patience is, indeed, a characteristic of his nature, but cannot be regarded as its essential or most strongly marked feature. As chief virtue of a central figure of an epic cycle, Hrolf's "patience" certainly is without parallel.



strength; Roland has the French sense of honor, whilst the Charlemagne of old lore is an imposing Napoleon; Dietrich von Bern shows in some measure the melancholy of the Teutons; but King Hrolf exhibits a principal quality of his own plain Danish people, fortitude. We may say that when the Danes for the first time became conscious of their own characteristics, as compared with those of other nations, it was as a patiently enduring people. We are able to follow this trait throughout our history, down to the very latest times. Now also there exists a Danish nation which like Hrolf endures the heat of a scorching fire beside it and is tried in patience, in the long test of endurance, with firm mind waiting for the waters which are to extinguish the fire.\*

#### 6. THE EPITHET *kraki*.

King Hrolf bears the curious epithet of *kraki*. All medieval sources are at one in this matter, both Danish and Icelandic sagas. As late as about 1400, Jutish peasants told tales of Rolf Kraak. The earliest occurrence is in a Scaldic poem from about 1050, but the name certainly is of far greater age.†

As to the meaning of the name, Saxo says that in Danish a tree trunk with branches half lopped off, so that it may be used as a ladder, is called a *krage*. As Saxo is a Zealander it is in no wise strange that the word should occur in Zealand with precisely this meaning. Peder Syv, the philologist, who was a farmer's son from

\* The author here alludes to the Danish population of Slesvic, since 1864 under the yoke of Prussia (transl.)

† *Rolfo Kraak* in fifteenth century MSS. of the Saxo-epitome, *Gesta Danorum* (*Saksnes oldh.*, i, 107); *Kraka barr* (= gold) in *þjóðolf* (*Sn. Edda*, i, 400).

the Roskilde district and village priest in Stævn, says (1695) that farmers still called this contrivance a *krybekrage* (climbing krage), which word is still used on the island of Falster. In Junge's *Nordsøllandske almue* (The People of North Zealand), a hundred years later, it is called a *skovkrag* ('forest krag'). This special meaning of the word is met again only in Telemarken, Norway; whereas in other dialects of Denmark and Scandinavia in general it has a slightly different value. In the country about Fredericia, Jutland, *krav* has the meaning of "single tree trunk with branches lopped off, used for fences"; in Scania, *krage* signifies a fence in the water; in all Sweden, and in some regions of Norway, *krake* is the word for a post with pegs, a tree trunk with its branches lopped off, used for hanging things on.\* It stands to reason, that Saxo's explanation of the name depends on his Zealand dialect. Had he been a Jutlander, or Scanian, his explanation would probably have been a different one.

According to Saxo, young Viggi, when he beholds Hrolf, asks what kind of long *kraki* is occupying the high-seat. This excessive length is not particularly flattering to the king; but the name becomes still less so when we investigate the word etymologically, in order to find what sort of quality *kraki* may designate when applied to persons.

\* *Krage* in Danish: cf. Kalkar, *Ordbog*, ii, 612, 645; F. Grundtvig, *Liset i Klokkergården*, p. 200; Feilberg, *Jysk ordbog*, ii, 284; in Jutland, and on the island of Sejrø near Zealand, *krage*, *krage træ*, *korstræ* is the designation for a beam laid alongside the roof tree of a house. As to *krake* in Norwegian and Swedish, cf. Aasen, *Norsk ordbog*, Ross, *Norsk ordbog*, and Riets, *Svensk dialectlexicon*. The Icelandic verb *at kraka* "to spread out hay to dry (on pole)" also presupposes the Norwegian use of the word.

As to the figurative meaning of the word, we learn from Aasen's *Norwegian Lexicon* that it signifies "a stunted and crooked tree," "a sickly and emaciated animal," "a small and slender-limbed person, one who has little strength, a poor fellow as regards strength." Among the originally Scandinavian population of the Shetland Islands, a *krak* signifies "a small, thin, and weak person." In Sweden, *krake* signifies not only "an emaciated, wretched horse," but also "a weak fellow, one who is without any strength"; in Swedish Finland *krakligr* signifies "weak, wretched, sickly (of persons)." The only one of these meanings which is found on old Danish territory is that of "wretched and emaciated horse" in Scania.\*

In the Icelandic versions we are told that Hrolf was "young of age and slender of limb"; for which reason Viggi asks what "little *kraki*" was sitting in the high-seat. In the Hrolfssaga he exclaims: "This man is thin and a *kraki* in appearance." In agreement herewith we find in another saga *krakligr* employed in the sense of "slim." † The fact that the word has less derogatory force in Iceland than elsewhere is probably due to the Icelanders forgetting the original meaning which was "tree with its twigs lopped off."

\* Rietz, *Sc. dial. lex.*, 349; Jakobsen, *Det norrøne sprog på Shetland* (1897), p. 67. Aasen mentions the use of *krake* (of persons) as "very common" in Nordre Bergenshus amt and Nordland, Ross notes *Krakaty*, m., "something stunted, a bungler, and the like" in the Valdres dialect. — I shall not here enter into other designations of "little," "stunted," since, perhaps, other stems have to be reckoned with: Old Norse *kregð*, Swed. *kräk*, Danish *kræ* (cf. Hollander, *Arkiv för nord. fil.*, xxix, p. 129 ff.; Falk og Torp, sub. *kræ*.)

† *ungr at aldri ok grannligr at vaxt*, Sn. Edda, i, 392; *þunnleitr er þessi maðr ok nokkurr kraki i andlitinu, eða er þetta konungr yðarr*, Hrólfssaga, Fas., i, 86; *krakligr*, Vígaglámsaga, c. 5, line 36.

Saxo was unacquainted with all the various meanings of the word. Knowing only the language of Zealand he was bound to believe that Hrolf kraki was called a long broomstick. But the only significance of the word as really found in use for the designation of a person is "a small, feeble figure, a stunted person."

We may well be surprised at the greatest hero king of the North bearing this epithet. But there it stands; nor may we escape the incongruity of it by assuming it to have been given to him at a later time; for the longer his fame lived the more impossible it would be to give him this nickname. In fact, it is not possible that this name was invented by the generation that glorified him in song, but must date from his very lifetime. The Scylding king, Helgi's son, must have had a body answering to the designation *kraki*. This does not necessarily mean that he was a cripple or sickly, for nicknames most often contain an exaggeration or a witticism. However, his stature, little becoming a king, must have attracted attention among the sturdy Danish warriors; in this sense one might have called him a stunted person — at least jocularly.

Another possibility is thinkable, that Hrolf received his epithet just because of his tall and heavy body. In this case, the name would absolutely contradict the facts, but would make no difference in our conception of the development of the tale which seems clearly based on his *kraki*-like stature. But I am little inclined to believe in the likelihood of an ironic meaning of the name. It is a common enough feature in the popular epithets that a laudatory name is used ironically. On the other hand it would be a difficult matter to show that a mocking epithet was to be taken in an opposite sense. More especially a characteristic expression for bodily shortcoming would scarcely be used ironically; for the figurative expression itself has

the force of a witticism. (Cf. H. F. Feilberg's article on *Næmsskít, Dania*, iii, especially the list on pp. 311-316; in a conversation, Dr. Feilberg agreed entirely with my opinion that the name is not used in an ironic sense. Note however, *þórr er lógi; hann var þó allra manna hæstr, Ólafssaga helga*, p. 139.) It will not do, either, to find a proof of the tall growth of the historic Hrolf in Saxo's expression that Helgi was tall but Roe (*Hróar*) small; for this is evidently meant to correspond to their respective characters in later Scandinavian lore.

One may ask whether the custom of giving such epithets really is so very old. We have certain knowledge only of the fact that this custom was more characteristically developed in the North in the Viking Period than in any other of the related nations. But this being the case, we are justified in believing the custom to have begun in very early times. According to their nature, the Runic monuments cannot be expected to reflect this formation. Seeing, however, that it occurs so frequently in popular tales, it scarcely can be ascribed to later invention (as is possibly the case in *knæggevanbaugi*); not only *kraki* but also King Harold's epithet *kilditann* (wartooth) seem more individually characteristic. Halfdan seems from the very oldest times to have borne the honoring epithet of "the high" (*hæah Healfdene*, Beowulf; *hæstr Skioldunga*, Hyndluljóth); possibly, it is not a mere accident that it forms a direct contrast to *kraki*.

The epithet of *kraki* has, then, a particular claim on our interest. In the midst of poetic transformations it is a piece of reality, preserved intact from the very oldest period of the Danish empire. This gives it an historical value; but it has also in a curious way played a poetic part. Popular poetry always tends to move in a narrow, traditional circle of subjects and persons; every bit of reality it meets on its way is transformed to gold in its palaces. This derogatory epithet of an excellent king was such a piece of reality. Popular tradition carried it along for some time in its idealizing celebration of Hrolf, mentioning it, perhaps, only by the way,

without being able to detect any poetic value in it; but by the time the simple episodic tales begin to grow, it is discovered that the epithet contains the allusion to a distinct personality which is entirely at variance with the current conception of the ideal hero. It is unfolded to a royal figure of a characteristically calm and self-controlled nature, and thus King Hrolf with his 'patience' enters the realm of Danish lore.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE ROYAL RESIDENCE AT LEIRE

#### 1. THE ROYAL RESIDENCE OF THE HEROIC LAYS AND THE TESTIMONY OF THE MONUMENTS

TO determine the location of the royal residence of Leire (Old Norse *Hleiðrar* pl. > Middle Danish *Lethræ* > Modern Danish *Leire*), linked in the old lore with so many brilliant rulers, is one of the most difficult problems for historical investigation. In trying to solve it, it will be of importance to note how far back in time the mutually contradictory witnesses go.

The heroic lays are agreed on letting every one of the Danish kings of the Scylding race have his residence in Leire. In the Quern Song there is mention of the *Hleiðrarstóll* (the residence or throne at Leire), i.e., the dominion of Denmark, as far back as the peace of Frothi. According to the Biarkamal, Hrolf is attacked in the Leire castle. According to the lay of Ingiald in Saxo, the young avenger of his father is called worthy to be the king of Leire and the ruler of Denmark.\* In the Bravalla Lay, the warriors from Leire are the house-carls of Harold Wartooth. In agreement with this, a skald of the eleventh century designates King Svein Estrithsson as *atseti Hleiðrar*, i.e., he who has his residence at Leire.†

\* P. 316: *Lethrarum dici dominus Danicæque mereris.*

† *Fornm.*, 2. vi, 313 = Jónsson, *Skjaldedigtning*, i B, 377.

The same is stated with still more detail in the medieval accounts. In the little chronicle from the Roskilde district we are told that the first king, Dan, founded Leire even before the uniting of the realm; that Ro later adorned it most beautifully, and that the sepulchral mounds of Dan, Ro, and Halfdan are to be found there (*SRD* i, 223–225). Saxo, on the other hand, asserts that Hrolf kraki built the town of Leire and adorned it most beautifully so that as the royal residence it far outshone all the other capitals of the country. However, he mentions in an earlier passage, that Hrolf as a little child had been sheltered in Leire castle from an attack of the enemies. Still further we are told how the Jutish petty King Amleth sought to avoid the overlordship of the “Leire King”; also that Harold Wartooth united all parts of the realm anew and fixed his residence at Leire where he had also his sepulchral mound thrown up. In fact, Saxo knows still another king, Olaf (ninth century), who has given his name to a mound near Leire.\* The Icelandic tradition is in accordance with Saxo: the progenitor of the race, Skiöld, founded the royal castle in Leire, on the island of Zealand, and “there was the residence also of most of the succeeding kings”; even the sons of Lothbrok still dwell at Leire.†

\* P. 82: *filium Rolsonem Lethrica arce conclusit*; p. 89: *Lethram pergitur, quod oppidum a Roleone constructum eximisque regni opibus illustratum, ceteris confinium provinciarum urbibus regia foundationis et sedis auctoritate praestabat*; p. 160: *fraudato Lethrarum rege* [i.e., Vigleco]; p. 362: *post hæc* [Haraldus] *Lethram occupat distractumque Daniae regnum in pristinum corpus reformat*; p. 391: *cineres quoque perusti corporis urnas contraditos Lethram perferri ibique cum equo et armis regio more funerari præcepit*; p. 439: *Cujus extincti corpus collis Olavi titulo celebrer prope Lethram congestus excepit*.

† *Fas.*, i, 347. The *Skiöldungasaga* mentions as dwelling in the Leire castle also Frothi the Peaceful, the sons of Leif, and Hrolf; *Fróði hinn frægi* (the Famous) is said to have his royal seat “in Leire and Ringsted.”



No other royal residence can in the least compare with Leire, according to the witness of heroic lays. Jælling is mentioned once by Saxo in connection with Offa and Vermund, and Jælling Heath (*Jalangrs heiðr*) in the Icelandic story of the Peace of Frothi. In the lays, it occurs not at all. In a single Icelandic passage Ringsted (*Hringstaðir*) is mentioned as the seat of Frothi the Famous (*hinn frægi*). Sigersted (*Sigarstaðir*) is properly the residence of the race of Siga.\* But what is that against the long line of kings in Leire, away back to the remotest antiquity, with the many events from the time of the Peace of Frothi until Hrolf's fall, with its royal sepulchres and all the splendor of the "Leire kings" and the "Leire throne," these strong expressions of the unity and power of the Danish people?

The very oldest written account agrees entirely with the passages cited. The German historian Thietmar of Merseburg, writing in the beginning of the eleventh century, relates as follows about the heathen practices of the Danes: "There is a place in those regions which is the capital of the realm, called *Lederun*, in that part of the country which is called *Selon* where, every ninth year, in the month of January, somewhat later than our Christian Yuletide, they assemble together and sacrifice to their gods 99 men and as many horses, dogs, and cocks or (?) hawks, believing that these will be of service to them in the realm of the dead and atone for their misdeeds." There can be no doubt that *Selon* here represents Zealand (Old Norse *Selund*) and that *Lederun*

\* *Hringstaðir* and *Sigarvellir* as the seat of Helgi Hundingsbani in *Helgakviða*, i, stanzas 8, 58, seem to be echoes of these traditions.

stands for Leire (Old Norse *at Hleiðrum*, Old Danish *at \*Ledhrum*).

It is an entirely different matter, however, to locate any tangible remains of Leire's former splendor. The first historian who speaks about Leire after personal inspection is Sven Aggison who writes: "Hrolf kraki was slain in Leire which then was a famous royal residence, but which now is one of the smallest villages near the city of Roskilde." This impression of a great contrast between the lustre of the old legends and the real extant remains is shared by all subsequent investigators.

Leire's only remains of the grandeur of former times consist in the sepulchral mounds which rise along the heights about the town, and the barrows which were to be seen between houses and in the fields, for they too have for the most part disappeared. It is true also that the names of the Scylding kings were associated with these mounds, both in the *Leire Chronicle* and in Saxo, and that this, on his authority, was done also in later times. However, it is not possible that these can bear witness of the Danish kings of the Viking Age or the Migration Period. When the archeologist J. J. A. Worsaae visited Leire for the first time he discovered that the place which for 200 years or longer had borne the name of Harold Wartooth's sepulchral mound really was a barrow of the Stone Age and contained flint tools. On the occasion of a later visit, he convinced himself that all the mounds about Leire belonged to the Stone Age and the Bronze Age, and that none of them dated from the Iron Age. Even if some periods of the Iron Age are

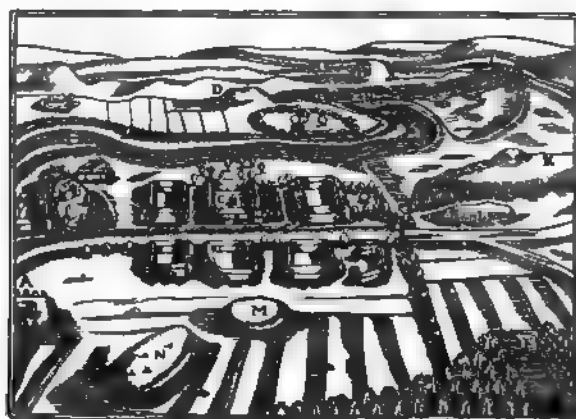
but poorly known as regards their burial customs, this utter lack of relics is important as qualifying any notion of Leire as royal residence and capital. Especially noteworthy is the fact that Leire possesses no monument corresponding to the large royal sepulchres of Jælling (of the tenth century), nor even such numbers of graves and Rune stones as are found near the city of Sleswick, dating from the period when the Gnupa race reigned.\*

The archaeologist Henry Petersen attacked the claims of Leire from another point of view. "Considering how generally towns, which in ages long past had some importance, have preserved, even after the lapse of centuries, some semblance of their former fame, and are now, at any rate, villages of some importance, it seems even more remarkable if Leire, some two or three hundred years before Sven Aggison's mention, had been the capital of the realm, its most important royal residence and place of sacrifice. If Leire had had this important position during heathen times we would, moreover, expect to find this city the capital of its district; but even in this respect Leire's slight prominence is remarkable. It lies close by the eastern boundary of the district formerly called Valby herred (district), for which reason it is likely that neither the district thing nor its probable sanctuary ever existed in the vicinity of Leire. If Leire had been of any importance, whether as a town or as a place of sacrifice during the latter times

\* Worsaae, *Danmarks oldtid* (1843), p. 89-90; the same in *Historisk tidsskrift*, iii, 275; Trap, *Danmark*, ii (3), 327-328; Wimmer, *De Danske Runemindesmærker*, i, no. 1 ff.

of heathendom, very probably a church would have been erected there." \*

Some scholars have thought that Leire formerly offered favorable conditions for vessels from the sea, and that Roskilde took Leire's place as a trading centre only after the Leire-aa (Leire brook) had shrunk to an insigni-



LEIRE (ACC. TO OLE WORM. MONUMENTA DANICA, 1643, s. 23).

*A* Monumentum Haraldi Hyldetandi. *B* Dronningstolen. *C* Kongsgaarden. *D* Hyldeby. *E* Ertedal. *F* annis Lethram alluens. *G* Steenby. *H* Monumentum Regis Olai ibidum tumulati. *J* Maglebroe. *K* Hestebierg. *L* Foleby. *M* Kirkeby. *N* Frijsby. *P* Kernerup Aae.

ficant water course. The committee which had at one time been appointed to investigate the position of the ancient Leire is of the opinion (in its report, 1843), that two bays formerly branched off from the Roskilde firth and that they met at Leire. But newer investi-

\* Henry Petersen, *Nordboernes gudsdyrkeles* (1876), p. 9. As to the last point he makes, it ought to be noted, however, that in Ole Worm's sketch there is a hillock west of the city, called Church Hill (*Kirkeshøj*); but also in other spots of the neighborhood there are hills of that name so that it is not safe to conclude from this that any church or chapel must have stood here.

gations by Dr. K. Rørdam, carried on for *Danmarks geologiske undersøgelse* (The Geological Survey of Denmark), have proved that the bay never reached the village; that north of the town there is a dwelling place of the later Stone Age at a spot which marked the end of the Leire firth toward the south; and that at the beginning of the Middle Ages the height of the water in the firth was but little different from what it is now.\*

In other words, all investigations undertaken on the spot lead us to reject in every respect the conception of the situation of Leire which is found in the written documents.

Which of the two kinds of sources are we to believe? The testimony of old songs and legends is of course not the very best argument when a definite historic-topographic problem is to be settled. But how about Thietmar's statement concerning the great sacrifices which were offered up at Leire? Is it permissible to rely on him, and to declare the arguments of the archaeologists to be without force?

Thietmar has the air of being well informed, but we shall have to call a good deal of his description in question. First of all, it is incorrect for him to mention these sacrifices as taking place in his own time, for they had not been made for some fifty or sixty years before his day, and were therefore known only by hearsay. In the second place, we can see, by comparing his data with Adam of Bremen's description of Upsala, that the details are about right, to be sure, but that the numbers seem

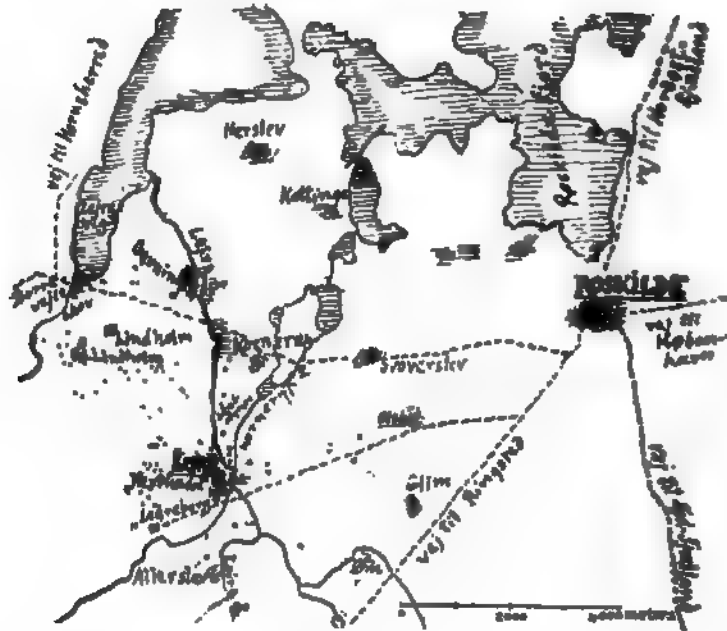
\* Private information from Dr. K. Rørdam; cf. now *Danmarks geologiske undersøgelse*, i, R., vi, 72-76; cf., however, *Affaldsdynger fra stenalderen undersøgte for Nationalmuseet* (1900), p. 171.

greatly exaggerated. Considering that the entire Swedish people sacrificed nine men in their great offerings, it sounds incredible that the Danes should under the same conditions have sacrificed ninety-nine. Very possibly the entire number of sacrificial animals reached that size. Most important of all, however, is the circumstance that the localization of the sacrifice in Leire is by no means as certain as has been thought. During recent years, Thietmar's own manuscript of the *Chronicon* has been examined, and it has been possible to understand the entire history of its origin. He began writing it in 1012, when he probably wrote the greater part of Book I, including the passage where the heathen practices of the Danes are mentioned; he then continued, until the whole work was ready, in 1018. In 1016 he completed the first book, after having obtained several new sources and made marginal glosses on what he had written before. The passage about the Danish sacrifices did not originally contain the name of Leire. It read only: "There is a place in that region, the capital of the realm, where they assemble every ninth year, in the month of January, later than our Christian Yuletide, and sacrifice to their gods," etc. When going over his work, later, he made a little addition to the word "capital," adding the words "called Leire, in the district of Zealand." \* In the course of the years intervening he

\* Thietmar von Merseburg, *Chronicon*, i, c. 17: *Est unus in his partibus locus, caput istius regni [Lederun nomine, in pago, qui Selon dicitur], ubi post viiii annos mense Januario, post hoc tempus, quo nos theophaniam Domini celebramus, omnes convenerunt, et ibi diis suis et lxxx et viiii homines et totidem equos cum canibus et gallis pro accipitribus oblati immolant, pro certo, ut predixi, putantes hos eisdem [erga inferos] servituros et commissa crimina [apud eodem] placaturos. Cf. the introduction to Kruse's edition in the series of*

### 332 THE HEROIC LEGENDS OF DENMARK

had received information concerning Denmark and the battles of Canute the Great. It is very likely that he



LEIRE AND SURROUNDINGS

A large number of the old mounds still exist, and are indicated by dots. Of the villages of the district, all those are put down for which a settlement during antiquity seems indicated. The present high roads from Roskilde to Northeast Zealand, to Copenhagen, to Ringsted (the old capital of Zealand), etc. are also indicated.

learned only then that Leire was the name of the royal Danish residence.

Considering all this, Thietmar's chronicle cannot claim the authority of contemporary testimony grounded on school editions of *Monumenta Germaniae*. A hint as to which "capital" Thietmar may have had reference to we may find in the fact that the great annual thing at Viborg was held precisely in January, directly after the close of the Yuletide, on the second Saturday after Epiphany. (*Samlinger til jysk historie og topografi*, i, 166 ff.)

first-hand observation. His information is made up of legendary traditions worked together by a man who was not gifted with any special insight into the matter. In other words, his testimony is of the same kind as all the other traditions or songs about the renown inseparably connected with the name of Leire during the Viking Age. And it is the rule that tradition and monuments offer contradictory evidence in this respect.

## 2. THE LOCAL TRADITION

In order to solve the problem, scholars began to look somewhere else for the old Leire. Henry Petersen maintained in 1876 that Ringsted, in the centre of Zealand, was the real royal residence and place of sacrifice and that its splendor had without sufficient reason been transferred to Leire, which had in all probability only been the harbor for Ringsted. In later years it has been the tradition among archæologists to assume that Leire probably was the same as the town of Søborg which by Saxo is designated as *urbs in Lethrica palude* (S. p. 770; cf. *Lethrica arx*, used for Leire castle). It seems very questionable, however, to place the royal residence in sparsely inhabited North Zealand. Moreover, the support lent by the supposed connection of Søborg Lake with the Kattegat fails entirely, according to the most recent investigations.\*

The above mentioned efforts to seek Leire elsewhere can, for the reasons cited, not be considered successful. And, considering the fact that we have a very complete

\* K. Rørdaam, *Danmarks geologiske undersøgelse*, ii, 46-48. For the current assumption, cf. Trap, *Danmark*, ii (3d ed., pp. 86, 87 with references).



local tradition, extending over a considerable length of time, they seem uncalled for. Sven Aggison's mention of Leire as a small village close by Roskilde cannot refer to any other place; not even to Udleire, a village which lies near the Western coast of the Roskilde firth, but at a greater distance from the city, and which is never mentioned by the simple name Leire.\* A still older source is the little chronicle (the "Leire Chronicle") which is remarkable for its local traditions from the Roskilde district; it mentions no less than three of the royal mounds. Neither can there be any doubt of Leire really being the Roskilde author's designation of the little village directly west of the city.† The same is true concerning Saxo; but in his case we can also furnish positive proof which place he has in mind. In the beginning of his Ninth Book, Saxo mentions a Danish King Olaf who was buried in a mound named after him *prope Lethram*. This certainly refers to the Olufshøj (Olaf's Mound) which lies by the road from Roskilde to Leire, halfway between the two places. The name of this sepulchral mound occurs first on Ole Worm's sketch of Leire and vicinity. At present it is called Sankt Oluf's Mound. When excavated, it proved to be a tumulus of the Bronze Age; but in its very centre was found a spur with silver mounting, which undoubtedly signifies that the mound was remade during the Viking Age to serve as a tumulus for some dignitary of that period. This is an archæologic corroboration of

\* In the Middle Ages, Utlerthæ, Utleer (*Ann.*, 1838, p. 363).

† This is corroborated by the fact that the large mound directly south of Leire (generally known as *Hestebjærg* "Horse Hill") was called *Danshøj* as late as the eighteenth century. (*Danmarks Helledigtning*, ii, p. 236).

Saxo's assertion that it contained a Danish king of the ninth century.\* And since this piece of information is historically correct, there must also be a good basis for Saxo's other assertion, that Harold Wartooth's body was brought to Leire and laid to rest there. Of course we do not know whether he was buried precisely in the large barrow of the Stone Age popularly assumed to be his grave.

It is quite remarkable to note that as late as the seventeenth century there existed a local tradition which did not have its origin in any written source, but in genuine popular reminiscences of the kings of yore. Stephanius, a scholar who about 1640 collected information concerning Saxo, says: "Here in Zealand, near the old royal seat of Leire there still exists a place which is called the King's Seat (*Kong(s)stolen*), consisting of one large stone prominent among a number of others; this was used in the olden days for the election of kings, and is still honored by old people's mention of it." † This information, then, contains an old popular tradition about a royal stone on which the king is to stand during election or homage. As such, it corresponds to the "Danerygh," probably near Viborg, to which the Jutlanders conducted Dan to elect him as their king; to the Mora stone in Sweden, to the sacred stone of the Goths mentioned in the *Hljðskviða*, and to similar

\* Cf. now for more detail the author's article *Danmarks ældste Kongegrav* in *Festskrift til L. Wimmer*, 1909 (= *Nord. tidsskr. f. filol.*, 3d series, xvii, p. 138 ff. Cf. also the (forthcoming) 3d volume of *Danmarks Heltedigtning*.

† *Notæ uberiores in Saxonem*, p. 29: *In Selandia nostra prope Lethram, vulgo LEIRE, locus exstat KONGSTOLEN, seu sedes regia, grandi saxo inter reliqua conspicuus, qui eligendo Regi olim fuit deputatus, et etiam nunc seniorum hac de re relationibus nobilitatus.*

royal stones among other nations.\* The most remarkable thing about the matter is the fact that it is precisely the old "Leire Chronicle" which contains the information about the choice of the king on the stone Danerygh. We find the same account in the peasant tradition of the seventeenth century, from the same district; but now the outlook is narrowed down: instead of being referred to Viborg, it is localized in Leire.

The learned investigations into the location of the ancient Leire begin with Ole Worm's *Monumenta Danica* (1643). It was he who heard the name Ertedal and conceived it to be the valley of the Goddess Hertha, and soon his methods were adopted by a whole host of followers. Sufficient attention, however, has not been called to the fact that his sketch of Leire (reproduced on p. 329) contains a number of names which he explicitly declares to be current in that locality and which in themselves seem quite in keeping with popular tradition. A half destroyed barrow with a large boulder in the middle is called *Dronningstolen* (Queen's Seat); cf. the "Kongstolen" of Stephanus which probably referred to the mound opposite, designated Harold Wartooth's Mound in Ole Worm's drawing. The farm in the middle of the village bears the name of Kongsgaard (king's estate), and the mounds round about have names which in no way sound unfamiliar, such as "Stone Hill," "Elder Hill," "Hill of (one called) Fris," "Church Hill," "Colt

\* For further information about the stone Danerygh (the word *ryge* signifies in Jutish "large stone," orig. "clump"), cf. *Danmarks Heltedigtning*, ii. 237. Concerning royal stones, cf. Bugge, *Norrøne Skrifter*, p. 362 ff.; Kek, *Einführung zur slav. lit.* (2d ed.), p. 101.

Hill," the last of which is on the slope of a natural hill, "Horse Hill." The whole tradition is as simple and artless as one can expect of a peasant tradition from the beginning of the seventeenth century. The memory of the individual kings had vanished, only the general conception of the splendor of the ancient royal seat of Leire had been retained.

### 3. SOLUTION OF THE PROBLEM BY THE EVIDENCE OF TRADITION

As we have seen, the study of the local traditions emphasizes the conflict between the evidence of tradition and the monuments. A solution of the problem can be hoped for only by putting such questions to ancient lore as it can answer with reliability. We must not treat the legends as historical sources the data of which are to be relied on. Rather, we ought to grasp the various episodes of the tradition in their bearings. Which events are connected with Leire and at the same time of so essential a nature that they were able to preserve the name down through the times? Our answer is soon ready: the century-old fame of Leire is in no wise built on great and decisive events. Only one is really memorable, Hrolf's fall. This episode is, to be sure, so indissolubly connected with Leire, that the mention of the place recurs in all sources, in the Biarkamal, in the Leire Chronicle, in Sven's and Saxo's histories, and in the Skioldungasaga and the Hrolfssaga. Here as elsewhere, Hrolf's fall is the event which profoundly influenced the entire conception of the oldest period of Danish history. From the Biarkamal and similar

poems, the conception of Leire as the royal seat of the Danish kings was taken over into the general poetic tradition, till finally there arose some such story as that the first king of Denmark founded Leire castle.

In this connection, the Leire Chronicle, which is so well versed in the local traditions of that region, assumes an added interest; not because of any divergence from the commonly accepted belief in Leire as the permanent royal residence, but because it contains local legendary material pointing to an older conception. It informs us in the usual way that Dan founded the royal seat of Leire, but it also preserves the tradition of Hroar(Ro) having enlarged Leire castle, which corresponds to the account in Beowulf of Hrothgar's building of Heorot. Still further, this chronicle mentions the graves of Dan (the royal progenitor), or Hroar and of Halfdan, but not of any other of the following kings. That is, in local tradition the glory of Leire is particularly connected with this branch of the Scyldings.

We have thus seen through the later, generally accepted, but vague, tradition about Leire as permanent capital, and have caught a glimpse of an older conception, in which the castle assumes importance through Hroar's additions (cf. Beowulf and the Leire Chronicle); it is the scene of Hrolf's fall (all sources), and it is fired during the battle (according to the Biarkamal). The last episode would explain why, after Hrolf's time, no other important event is connected with Leire.

Now we understand also why Leire was but an insignificant village from the very beginning of the Middle Ages. The royal castle had been burned down during

Hiarvarth's attack, and there is nothing which would indicate that Leire had been a royal residence after the sixth century.\* Hence it is no wonder that there are no mounds on the site of the ancient Leire corresponding to those at Jælling in Jutland; for at the time when the great sepulchral mounds of Thyra and Gorm were raised, Leire was deserted and had sunk into insignificance. Neither is it strange that no copious monuments are found there; for the burial customs of that period called only for simple graves dug on some hillside. Our not finding remains of that time near Leire does not, therefore, militate against our conception. Very possibly we may, some day, happen upon the graves and treasures of the old Leire kings on the banks of the Leire river.

In the Gold Period (or Later Migration Age) the bodies of the dead were interred without ornaments or other belongings, so that the graves of that period are hardly distinguishable from the graves of other periods. The gold treasures of that age were hidden separately in the ground (see above, p. 37). It is, therefore, not impossible to believe that the numerous skeletons found from time to time in the banks of the Leire River (below the village of Leire and to the south, close to the village of Gevinge) are the remains of Scylding warriors; but any verification of such a hypothesis it is hardly possible to obtain, for one is justified in attributing these graves to a much later time as well. It will hardly do to assign the Halfdan dynasty to the preceding age of the Zealand

\* The entrance to its harbor at the shallow head of the Roskilde firth was certainly little adapted to the larger and deep-drawing vessels of the Viking Age.

chieftains' graves (Earlier Migration Age); nor did the district of Leire and Roskilde have any particular importance during that period.\*

Moreover, it is not surprising that Leire did not become the legal and religious center of any district or any part of the country, considering that it was the residence of the Scylding kings only during two or three generations. Nor does it necessarily follow that it must have been a market town or harbor, which for that matter the sources do not claim.

It is an easier task to mention all that Leire was not than to determine its real size and importance. The only royal names credibly connected with it are those of Hroar and his successor Hrolf. The name *Hleiðrar* itself probably means "huts" (cf. Gothic *hlaiþrs* "hut") and would seem to indicate a settlement that grew from a small beginning.† Besides, we have the name *Heorot* (hart, stag) applied in the English epics to Hroar's slender royal hall.

To be sure, it might seem doubtful to a skeptical critic whether Leire ever played any other rôle than merely that of the scene for Hrolf's fall. Nevertheless, this doubt is hardly justifiable. In the oldest sources the fame of the royal castle and its relation to Hroar stand out very clearly; hence its renown must be older than the hero worship of Hrolf kraki. In that case we shall have to imagine Leire as a large and well estab-

\* Sophus Müller, *Vor Oldtid*, pp. 521-522, 533, 536, 595, 600-601 (German tr. by Jiriczek, 1898, *Nordische Altertumskunde*, ii, pp. 101-102; 113, 184, 190), and private information from director S. Müller.

† With a remarkable display of logic some scholars concluded that if Goth. *hlaiþrs* was used to designate a Jewish "tabernacle," the word must also in Old Norse and Gothic have meant a tentlike sanctuary.

lished estate, like that of Jælling; or else as like the more considerable royal manors of the beginning of the Middle Ages.

Great weight is to be attached to the old expression *Hleiðrarstóll*, which can hardly signify anything but the royal residence at Leire: it was remembered, not as the scene of the battle, but as the king's permanent place of residence. The expression is paralleled by the Anglo-Saxon poetical expression *brego-stól* ("ruler's seat," "dominion," in *Beowulf*), and by the historical *solium regni* of the Merovingians.\* The evident relationship between these expressions would seem to indicate that this designation was attached to the name of Leire from the very oldest times.

It is scarcely possible to gain a clear conception of the old Leire as it really existed. The sources generally designate it as an "estate" or "manor" (*curia, urbs*, as in Saxo's version of the Biarkamal, *Hleiðrargarðr* in the *Hrolfssaga* and the *Biarkarimur*). The Biarkamal represents it as fortified, the fight in the castle gate is decisive. *Beowulf* contains the mention of a wall or rampart (*weall*) surrounding the buildings.† A single later source plainly calls it Leire castle (*arx Lethrica*, Saxo's Danish tradition).

The importance of the location seems to be due to the nearness of the Isefjord, whose innermost part is the Roskilde firth. Possibly, the political conditions of

\* Die vorstellung vom throne (oder stuhl) als symbol des königtums ist dem merovingischen königtum entlehnt, wo das *solium regni* sich unter einfluss spättrömischer symbolik entwickelt hatte (Alex. Bugge, *Zeitschrift für deutsche philol.*, xlii, 375).

† *Beowulf*, i, 783; Heyne, *Über die lage der halle Heorot* (Paderborn, 1864), p. 38.



the times were influential, such as the long continued hostilities with the Heathobards whose attacks came from the south and by way of the sea. The situation of Leire would have offered excellent protection against them on three sides. Moreover, an attack by way of the Isefjord would be a hazardous matter, since the attacking fleet would risk being bottled up by a force coming to the relief. The location may also be said to be well chosen with a view to fortification, being the neck of land between the two rivers which join there. Assuming that these strategic reasons were, indeed, decisive in determining the location of Leire castle, it is all the more comprehensible that the spot lost its importance, once the Danes were undisputed masters in the land.

It would, of course, be of the greatest interest, historically, if we could determine exactly where the real Leire residence, or Leire castle, had stood; but unfortunately our means to do so are but limited.

The only source which may be relied on to assist us is the local tradition. Concerning this we know that it goes back to the twelfth century and that it consistently maintains that the village of Leire is the same as the royal residence of antiquity. Starting from this assumption, several spots have been pointed out as the probable location of the royal residence: (a) On his sketch of Leire and surroundings, Worm designates the central farm in the village (Kongsgården, i.e., the Royal Farm or Estate) simply as "the place where in olden times lay the royal castle." (b) On the other hand, the so-called Leire commission (appointed in the forties of the last century in order to investigate the location of the ancient Leire and destined to play so great a rôle in archæology by the discovery of the kitchen-middens of the Older Stone Age) pointed out a spot directly south of the southwesternmost farm as showing traces of having been the location of the burnt royal castle. (c) A third possibility is that the peninsula between the confluence of the Leire and Kornerup brooks was the location of the royal castle. In that case the long, low stone

circle there might be assumed to be the foundation of a building, which site might have been chosen because of its inaccessibility. To be sure, nothing is known about whether the fortifications of antiquity ever were placed between natural moats formed by the intersection of rivers—as was the case in the Middle Ages. We are forced to admit, then, that so far, no sure foundations in fact have been established so as to make it indisputably probable that the ancient royal seat was located on the present village site. The reason tradition so strongly insists on this may be that the real site of the royal castle was made so unrecognizable by the conquest and destruction of the stronghold that there was nothing for local tradition to attach itself to.

Owing to these considerations, some few investigators turned their attention to another place in the same district. The first to do so was a recently deceased amateur student of history, the veterinarian Tobiesen of Gevninge, who during a long life collected materials for the history of his home district, both from written and oral tradition, in a large manuscript volume, the *Gevninge MS.* The country northwest of Leire village is to a large extent covered by forest, and in these woodlands, on a hillock surrounded by swampy meadows, are found the remains of a medieval castle, the so-called *Old Lindholm (Gammel L.)* Very possibly the mounds and great boulders on this elevation go back to a still older settlement and fortification. A searching investigation under the leadership of a professional archæologist has not yet been undertaken.

Without knowing of Tobiesen's conclusions, the most eminent Danish archæologist, Sophus Müller, has given expression to a theory to the same effect.\* From Roskilde a line of burial mounds runs in a westerly and northwesterly direction, indicating one of the chief highways during ancient times. This highway crossed the Leire and Kornerup brooks at a ford near their confluence, traversed the site of Leire village, and continued in a northwesterly direction through the village fields and the regions now covered with forest, until it reached the point which in that time was the innermost corner of the Roskilde firth (*Leirevig*), now a swamp (south of the ford of

\* His opinions on this matter are not published as yet; but his remarks on an expedition of the Royal Archæological Society are fully reported in the Copenhagen newspaper, *Berlingske Tidende*, 1903, July 1. Cf. sketch p. 332.

Borrevejle \* — a name which indicates that there once was a ford here, in olden times — from which point several roads radiate toward Northwest Zealand). In the woodlands covering these parts, rather near to the end of this height of land, there lies the Old Lindholm just mentioned.

Both Tobiesen and the archæologist Müller seek support for their theory in the names of the surrounding localities: "Lejresrende" (L. lane of water) is the name of the depression which winds through the forest, with a small watercourse in the middle, as far as Borrevejle; "Leiremarken" (L. field) is the name of a field in the neighborhood: in these names both see traces of the old Leire. However, their theory is invalidated by a grievous linguistic mistake. In this neighborhood there were in former times some farms called Leirup, in older Danish *Leghetorp*. This name has nothing whatever to do with the old *Hleiðrar* (Leire), but signified originally "the settlement of Leki"; for all Danish names with the suffix -thorp (> -rup) designate the place as "the settlement of this or that person" and date from the Viking Age or the earlier Middle Ages. Only a linguistic coincidence has made the name *Leghe-thorp* (> Leirup) resemble *Hleiðrar* (> Leire). It follows that there is no proof whatever in these names for seeking the old *Hleiðrar* in the ruins of Lindholm.

The difficulty consists in our not knowing, hitherto, what the fortifications or royal castles of the period of the Migration of Nations looked like. The defect is supplied in the main by the fact that we have an exceedingly detailed knowledge of such works as existing in certain regions of Sweden. The Gautic provinces, constituting the large southern portion of Sweden north of the province of Scania, were provided with numerous fortifications for the purpose of defence, consisting of a natural rocky height (a *kulle*) whose most accessible slope was barricaded by a wall of rough (or slightly hewn) stones. Some of these fortifications served only as refuges, others were lasting settlements, witness the thick layers of refuse, mixed with antiquities, found there. These fortifications are situated near the head of a firth or lake, or by some water course — in short, in close proximity to highways and thickly settled districts. Our knowledge of the Gautic fortifications of the Migration Age is based mainly on

\* An old spelling *Borthewæthlæ* would signify a ford surrounded by woods; but the modern pronunciation and spelling point, rather, to an original *Borghæwæthlæ*, i.e. ford near the castle.

the researches of Dr. Bror Schnittger of the National Museum of Stockholm. A summary of his investigations is found in his article *Die vorgeschichtlichen burgwälle Schwedens*, in the fine collection of papers dedicated to Oscar Montelius (1913), p. 337-349.

As to the time of their use, it is indicated by the antiquities found in them. Those which have so far been unearthed belong to the fifth or sixth century. These fortifications occur in great numbers. In East Götland alone there are no less than sixty-one. They evidently served the purpose of refuge against enemies coming from the sea. All the districts of the Gautic lands (whether now they constituted a kingdom or an alliance of tribes) jointly sought safety by help of these fortifications.

They had not only the character of watchtowers and forts but were also the residences of kings and chieftains. This is most plainly shown in the fortifications on the island of Öland: inside the circular walls constructed of broken limestone there are a great number of chambers, all symmetrically arranged and partly built into the circumvallation with walls of limestone — showing that great expense was incurred in erecting these dwellings.

In case Leire castle was of the same nature as the contemporaneous fortifications in the land of the Gautar it most probably lay on a hillock close by one of the great highways. If so, scarcely more than one spot in all this region is adapted to that rôle, viz., Old Lindholm near the head of the Roskilde firth, Borrevejle. On that eminence there are still to be found, besides traces of medieval buildings, loose boulders dragged up from the fields, which to a surprising degree remind one of the rough stone walls of the Gautic fortifications. There is an exact analogue to its site: just as Old Lindholm lies at a very short distance from the innermost corner of Zealand's main firth, the Roskilde firth, likewise the tremendous Torsborg lies on a hillock ("kulle") near the head of East Götland's chief bay, Bråviken, with a view of the entire bay, and quite near the old royal estate Ringstad. If to Leire there attach memories of Hrolf's last fight, Ringstad is associated with the great battle between Harold War-tooth and the "Swede-king" Ring, the Bravalla battle on the plain at the head of Bråviken bay.\* Hence, historic analogy sanctions

\* Concerning this and the political significance of the fortifications of East Götland, cf. the author's forthcoming third volume of *Dann. Heltedigtning, Harald Hildetand og Bravallaslaget*; for the first, cf. his article *Bråvallen* in the *Festskrift till Noreen* (= *Namn och Bygd*, ii, 1914, p. 297-312).

altogether our looking for the ancient Leire castle on the site of Gammel-Lindholm.

It is best to remember, however, that this conclusion rests only on historic (i.e., archæologic) analogy. Excavation alone will settle the question as to whether in antiquity — especially during the Migration Period — there stood a castle here whose traces were obliterated by the erection of a medieval castle. There is no linguistic support whatever for our theory, nor does the testimony of the legends warrant it. The tradition of the greatness of Leire is altogether associated with the village which kept the name of Leire down through the times. We have, at present, no means of determining with certainty whether popular tradition is right or wrong in maintaining Leire village and its environs to be the site of the old castle.

However, it is not Leire's long vanished historic past which interests us so much as its presence in song, and its grandeur in the realm of the imagination. It is not at all unlikely that precisely the fact that nothing was left of Leire castle may have furnished the impulse to skalds to become eloquent about its vanished glory. Hrolf's fall, terminating its period of greatness, would thus have become strongly attractive as the subject for the songs of a later time. The sudden end of a famous royal house generally proves one of the chief impulses toward epic creation, because of the strong impression which the event makes both on the contemporaries and posterity. Thus, Ermanric's Ostrogothic realm sank into ruin, but the fame of his castle and his treasures lives on in song. The power of the Burgundians was crushed and was transformed into the legend of the fall of the Giukungs and the treasure of the Nibelungs. Theodoric's Italian realm vanished to live all the more nobly in song. Thus also the glory of Leire castle

perishes, and the race which founded the greatness of the Danish realm is extinguished for ever. This is the pathetic and tragic element which has given the heroes of the Migration Period an immortality in song.

We have been obliged to do away with the current conception of Leire as the continuous seat of royalty during the olden times and as the central fane of heathendom. In its place we conjure up the rich scene of Leire castle enveloped in flames and dashed to ruin at the death of Hrolf. But on this lurid background there rise transfigured the shapes of the most glorious heroes of the North.

## CHAPTER VII

### HROLF'S BERSERKERS

#### 1. THE BERSERKERS ON THE VISIT TO ATHISL

**I**N Northern tradition, Hrolf is invariably accompanied by his twelve *berserkir* or *kappar* (champions, chosen warriors). This is an important feature in the characterization of the hero. Danish tradition, however, whether early or late, does not mention them at all. Hence, in case this feature did exist at any time in Denmark, it must have disappeared by the time the *Biarkamal* was composed. But we may be very sure that it was non-existent. Motifs of this kind are easily attached to a story and are slow to disappear again.

Moreover there is no reason for doubting that the troop of warriors belongs to a later phase of development. Even if one does not allow one's judgment to be guided by *a priori* reasons, or by the analogy with other cycles of tradition, one cannot fail to be convinced by tracing the development as seen in the various monuments. In the very oldest songs (*Widsið* and *Béowulf*), no hero rises to the level of the king. In the *Biarkamal*, the step has been taken to magnify Hrolf's greatness through his warriors, and there the new figure of Hialti is found associated with Biarki. Common Scandinavian tradition, derived from stories of the Danish housecarls, makes the next advance. In this, the deeds of the warriors, and especially of Hialti, bulk larger than those of Hrolf

kraki himself. Finally we have this company of twelve chosen warriors as the very kernel of all Norn traditions about Hrolf. In the *Skiöldungasaga*, their preponderance over the king in point of interest is obvious, and in the youngest source, the *Hrolfsaga*, this is so much the case (as, e.g., in the episode in Athisl's hall where the warriors must cover Hrolf with their shields in order to protect him from burning) that these stories of the warriors usurp all interest. In fact, they spread so luxuriantly at the expense of Hrolf as to crowd out entirely the story of Viggi's revenge. In a word, the sources give in the clearest manner a picture of the gradual unfolding of the stories of Hrolf's warriors.

The problem is not completely solved, however, until we know definitely concerning each episode in which the berserkers figure, whether they were incorporated into the tradition about Hrolf, or whether they are the result of an internal development. We have to do here with rather extensive prose narratives dealing, partly with the youthful exploits of the single berserkers before they arrive at the court of Hrolf, and partly with Hrolf's expedition to Upsala. The latter episode thus grows to be the very kernel of the entire Icelandic tradition about Hrolf kraki, and we must therefore examine its various features one by one.

1. *The Battle on the Ice of Lake Vener*. According to the narrative of the *Skiöldungasaga*, this battle resulted from hostilities between King Athisl of Sweden and King Ali of Upland in Norway.\* They had made an ap-

\* *Áli enn upplenzki, hann var ór Nóregi* (*Ynglingasaga*, c. 29); *Alonem Op-landorum regem in Norvegia* (Arngrim); *er réð fyrir Nóregi er Áli hét* (*Snorra Edda*, i, 394).



pointment to fight it out on the ice of Lake Vener in West Götland. Then King Athisl asked his brother-in-law Hrolf kraki to come to his assistance, promising to repay his men. Each of his berserkers was to receive three pounds of gold (and the other warriors ten marks of silver each, as one of the texts has it); moreover Hrolf was to be given his choice of the three greatest treasures in Sweden. However, Hrolf was not able to come because of a war with the Saxons; but he sent his twelve berserkers, Bøthvar biarki and the others. In the battle, Ali and a great many of his army lost their lives, and Athisl took possession of his helmet Hildisvin and his horse Raven. The berserkers asked for their reward and chose for Hrolf as the three most precious things the helmet Hildigolt, the byrnie Finsleif which steel could not pierce, and the ring Sviagris. But Athisl refused to yield up the rewards promised, and the berserkers had to return home empty-handed. When Hrolf heard of this he straightway set out for Upsala.

The true explanation of this battle is to be found in a source of far greater age, Beowulf. When King Ottar (*Óththere*) died, his brother Ali (*Onela*, Runic \**Anila*) obtained the royal power in Sweden; but Ottar's sons, who had striven against Ali in vain, fled for succor to Heardred, the king of the Geatas, across the sea; later Athisl (*Eádgils*), the son of Ottar, returned with Geatish arms and men (which King Beowulf had given him); he then accomplished his revenge by cruel warfare, and killed Ali.

This source, then, tells us that Ali was not a Norwegian king, but was Athisl's uncle and ruled in Sweden.

In case the epithet " of Uppland " is old, it must refer, not to the Norwegian, but to the Swedish district so-called.\* But we learn also that it was not the race of the Scyldings which helped Athisl to gain his victory over Ali, but the royal house of the Geatas. A confusion with Hrolf's warriors is not strange, for in some of the sources the rulers of the Geatas are called Danes. Since Hrolf was the Danish king who was contemporaneous with Athisl, his warriors were of course thought to have participated in the battle.

But why did the Norwegians incorporate this episode into the traditions about Hrolf ? Should we not expect, rather, that Danish poets would keep alive the memory of this expedition which concerns them so much more nearly than the distant Norwegians ? The sources furnish us a clear answer to this question. It is Norwegian tradition that has preserved the story of Ali's fall. It is told, not as an episode in the Scylding traditions, but in the Swedish traditions about the Ynglings, a cycle which bulks large in Norwegian histories, whereas it never received any attention in Denmark. We find the story already in the Ynglingatal of Thiotholf, who mentions Athisl as Ali's slayer. A fuller account is given in the Kalfsvisa, a Skaldic list probably of the twelfth century (*Snorra Edda*, i, 482). In it we read that " Athisl rode on (the horse) Slongvi," and that " Ali rode on (the horse) Raven, when they rode to the ice; but another, grey (horse), carrying Athisl on his back, tumbled to the east (i.e., to Upsala), wounded by spear."

\* Fahlbeck, *Beovulfsgædet*, pp. 61-62; Bugge, *Paul und Braune, Beiträge*, xii, 12 ff.

In all probability the poet imagined Athisl's horse to have been wounded in the battle and, tortured by pain, to have thrown off his rider on the way home, thus causing the king's death. The presuppositions for this poem are found in Thiotholf's lay, in which for the first time Athisl is called the slayer of Ali, and in which we are further told that Athisl's skull was crushed when he was thrown by his horse.\* This lively and characteristic story cannot have been told as a part of the traditions centering about Hrolf, for it cannot be reconciled with Hrolf's subsequent visit to Athisl. Only the Icelandic sagas could fittingly incorporate the story about Ali in the Hrolf cycle, as Athisl's death was not there connected with his victory over King Ali. The sources thus furnish clear proof that a story from the Yngling cycle has been incorporated here in the history of the Danish king.

So much for the origin of the story. It is a noteworthy feature that the horses of the kings are named. This is otherwise the case only with the most valorous figures of the epic poems, especially when they exhibit a supernatural, heroic character. In Norse tradition Sigurth with his Grani is the only hero with whom we find a horse inseparably connected. To be sure, Norse conditions were not favorable to the development of such

\* There is a very early version of the story which is related to that found in the *Kálfsfotla*. In the *Ynglingasaga*, c. 29, it is related, undoubtedly on the authority of Eyvind skaldaspillir's genealogical poem *Háleygiatál*, how King Goðgest lost his life by being thrown by his horse Raven which was sired by King Ali's horse of the same name. It would seem as if Eyvind imagined that the captured horse itself was the cause of Athisl's death; and such a scene as the faithful animal avenging its master would be entirely in the spirit of Old Norse epic poetry.

poetic heroes, for the necessary background of actual equestrian combat was lacking.\* Ali's and Athisl's steeds are, therefore, old details of epic poems composed under different conditions, and scarcely in Norway. Now we know from Jordanes' History of the Goths that the Swedes had excellent horses,† and his information dates from precisely those times when the real King Ali and the real King Athisl were ruling in Sweden. His information is to be understood with reference to the fact that during the period of the Migration of Nations the battles of the Teutonic tribes were fought principally on horseback. These conditions naturally gave rise to heroic names of horses such as the above.

It is worthy of notice how little contact there is, even on this point, between the traditions about Hrolf and the story of Ali. In the case of the great hero king we know the names of his sword, of his hawk, and of his dog; but no source mentions the name of the horse that carried him unhurt over the Fyre Plains.

This is the only one of the Norn berserker stories that can be traced to a historic basis, and this basis is seen to have been originally foreign to the history of Hrolf.

2. *The meeting of Hrolf with Öthin.* Hrolf is journeying to Upsala with a large company. On the way, he stays over night with an old, one-eyed freeholder who

\* I am not referring to the many equestrian heroes of the *Kalfsvisa* who are, partly, of a rather apocryphal nature, partly derived from well-known Eddic poems by the simple device of using poetic epithets as proper names. Our understanding of conditions must of course be based on the epic narrative as it lives on in song and saga.

† Jordanes (*Getica*, c. 3): *Alia vero gens ibi moratur Suehans quæ solut Thyringi equis utuntur cæcis.*

tries Hrolf's men by cold, thirst, and heat, and counsels the king to take with him to Upsala only the twelve berserkers who stood the test. On their return, they are entertained by the same freeholder Hrani, as he calls himself, who offers the king a set of arms. Hrolf refuses to take them, thereby arousing the man's wrath. A little farther along the road, Bqthvar begins to suspect that the old one-eyed man was Othin. They face about, but find no trace of the farm. Then they know for certain whom they had encountered; but Bqthvar advises the king to remain in his castle in peace thereafter, for his good fortune will now have deserted him.\*

The main point in this story is that Hrolf arouses the hostility of Othin and thus causes his own fall; and the function of the story is to connect closely the two great events in Hrolf's life, the expedition to Upsala and Hiarvarth's descent upon Leire. Originally, these two episodes had nothing to do with each other; but when the connected saga was composed, a link between them was found to be necessary. All the presuppositions for the above story are present in the Biarkamal, in which Othin in person appears on the battlefield to assist in the fall of the Scylding king. Read with Norn heroic poetry as background, this episode would necessarily appear to be an indication of Othin's personal hostility against Hrolf, which would again require some account of how Othin came to be his enemy. An item of popular belief in the Biarkamal about the Lord of Death fetching his

\* *Hrólfs saga*, cc. 39 and 46; the last part also in Arngrim. However, Arngrim's source, the *Skiöldungasaga*, must have contained also the first part of the story, since Arngrim says in his brief rendition that Hrolf set out with an entire army but rode to Upsala with but twelve of his warriors.

followers is now transferred to saga episodes. Details for the elaboration were found in the favorite motifs of Norn poetry. This nightly figure of Othin, one-eyed, but otherwise human in appearance, is usual in the sagas. The offer of arms as a pledge of victory likewise is a well-known device. (Cf. *Hyndluljóð* "To Hermoth he gave helmet and byrnie, but to Sigmund a sword.") The omen of impending ruin occurs frequently in Saxo's Norwegian sagas as well as in Icelandic literature. Just as in this saga Hrolf's career is mysteriously guided by Othin, likewise the lives of other Danish heroes such as Harold Wartooth and Starkath also come under his influence when transplanted in Norn soil — the only difference being that in the case of Hrolf the god becomes his enemy.

There is no external evidence of these scenes with Othin existing before about the year 1200. To judge from their inner characteristics they originated precisely at the time when the stories about Hrolf were being woven into a connected saga. Among the related episodes, the story of Harold Wartooth is to be dated before 1066, whereas the gift of arms to Sigmund is presupposed in the *Hyndluljóð* which belongs to the second half of the tenth century. These episodes undoubtedly existed and furnished the model for Othin's appearance in the Hrolf legend, where his presence was not essential at first.

We cannot deny our admiration for the resourcefulness and ingenuity displayed by the saga teller in fitting all these elements into his story. Scenes holding our full interest by their own merit prepare us to hear of the heroism of the berserkers and the dangers that

await them at Athisl's court. At the same time, the scene with Othin furnishes the reason why Hrolf ventured into the power of so treacherous a friend with such a small band. Most cleverly thought out is the last scene by which the saga teller connects Hrolf's journey to Upsala with his last fight at Leire. Before, there had not been any connection whatever. This alone is sufficient to demonstrate that the development took place in the characteristic saga telling of Norn regions where the individual legend could unfold its possibilities more freely than in Danish tradition.

3. *The Leap over the Fire.* At Athisl's court, Hrolf and his warriors have a number of adventures; the chief one is the scene in which the Swedes under the pretext of trying their guest's hardiness attempt to burn them in the hall. Hrolf and his warriors fling their shields on the fire and leap over it. "He flees not the fire who over it springs." The first part of the story, viz., the test of fortitude, when Hrolf is about to be burnt to death, is known also in Danish tradition; but the magnificent ending of the episode is probably new. The powerful scene seems to have arisen spontaneously in the creative imagination of the epic poet. Just as Sigurth Fafnisbani in a mythic-heroic world rides his horse Grani through the flickering flames to Brynhild's bower, so here the Norse hero king traverses the flames, but in a more realistic scene. His and his warriors' shields subdue the blaze whilst they leap over it. The conception is to be reckoned as one of the most splendid productions of Old Norse heroic poetry and may with great likelihood be referred to the best period of the older traditions.

Nevertheless there seems to be an element of real life in this scene, just as there is in all the scenes, whether common to the entire North or of purely Danish origin, dealing with the life of the warriors. There exists information — though, to be sure, of later times — of the treatment which fell to the lot of the newcomers at the Swedish court. Olaus Magnus, the last Catholic archbishop in Sweden, in his large ethnographic work (*Historia de gentibus septentrionalibus*, xv, c. 27) describes how the “Norse,” i.e., Swedish, courtiers amused themselves with an ordeal by fire of strangers: “It is the custom that in the cold season one lights great fires in front of the halls of the Norse kings and chieftains, especially with the wood of the red fir which, when burning, roars and whistles so that one at a great distance does not see, as much as hear, the blaze and the houses. But in order not to let this loud elemental noise go to waste, the men sitting about the fire arise — as if called thither by drums — and begin a ring-dance, and all the more eagerly the braver they are. And they contract the chain so violently that the last man necessarily must plunge into the fire as if a link had burst. At once he leaps out again and, with the exultation of his fellow dancers, is made to sit on a higher seat, and empty a large tankard or two of strong ale, as having violated the king’s fire. . . . To be excepted, however, are those who had previous practice in the fire dance. They have sufficient agility and strength not to be driven into the fire any longer. For this reason they are honored by greater tankards although they did not violate the king’s fire. But the other dancers continue the dance in continual glee till



late in the pitch dark night, falling almost all, one after the other, into the fire. In this wise they obtain young warriors. But if any one violates the king's door (i.e., the king's castle) and maliciously overdoes the game, he can scarcely escape being thrown into the fire himself."

As a link in the Hrolf legend this scene appears to be late. It presupposes a body of warriors who endure the same dangers as their king and who fling their shields on the fire together with him. If we should imagine him acting alone, the whole episode would be trivial. The story arose, therefore, only after the compact body of berserkers had been introduced. It stands to reason that some tradition to the effect that Hrolf and his warriors fled neither fire nor arms must have been in existence to suggest this episode.

As we see, then, both the hero legend and the Swedish custom inform us of a test by fire in the hall of the Swedish king; in both instances, it is the king or his housecarls who subject the young warriors or the strangers to such a test, and in both cases safety is sought by jumping quickly through the fire. So much similarity renders some relationship between the two descriptions rather likely. On the other hand, there are important discrepancies. The saga man who formed the legend cannot have been acquainted with the custom as practiced in the Swedish king's hall. This warrior scene is not represented as typical of the Swedish housecarls, for the leaping of Hrolf's warriors over the fire is exceptional among the scenes in the royal castle in Upsala. Hence not the custom itself, but rather a fleeting remi-

niscence or rumor of it, served as the basis of this episode in heroic legend.

There is one essential similarity between the leap over the fire and the scenes in the royal hall we have just witnessed: the old custom was turned into the action of a single personage and into a story. In this respect the climax of the Icelandic story resembles the accounts common to Scandinavia—in this case, the Danish legends. But the custom was less correctly understood in its real significance (which, culturally, betrays a greater distance separating it from its origin), though it has not, on the other hand, altogether become the deed of a single hero. This, with regard to the formation of legends, fixes it as a weaker and, probably, late impulse.

Still other plots and treacherous assaults on King Hrolf's company are reported during their sojourn in Upsala. Both of our Icelandic sources tell how the guests at their arrival are led into a dark hall in whose floor there is dug a deep pit; but the warriors set their swords before them on the ground and thus detect the pitfall in time. The Hrolf saga continues with an account of how Athisl's men stood concealed behind the tapestry and attacked Hrolf and his warriors, but were all cut down. Even after the vaulting over the fire the saga reports an attempt to burn the hall over their heads; but that is rather too much of a good thing. Still another kind of motif is seen in Athisl maltreating their horses, and queen Yrsa substituting others for their use. Such episodes evidently are employed to give the saga life and variety.

This Icelandic form of the expedition to Upsala reminds one in many ways of the Welsh story of Branwen, which is one of the oldest in the Mabinogion and was written down about 1100. An Irish king asks for the hand of Branwen, the sister of the British king. He receives her in marriage, but during the wedding feast the ears, lips, and tails are cut off the horses of the Irish. This is the cause of mutual hostilities. Branwen is mocked and taken along as slave. The king of the British crosses the sea with his men and is received in a newly erected hall; but behind every pillar there stands a man concealed in a leather bag. The Britons slay the men thus hidden, one of them hurls the little son of the Irish king into the hearth fire, and a battle begins in which all the Irish are killed. The surviving Britons return home with Branwen. — This story of Branwen contains a number of motifs curiously similar to Norse and German tradition. It would seem that the story in the Mabinogion has borrowed both from Kudrun and the Nibelungenlied (cf. Alfred Nutt in *The Folklore Record*, v, 1-32). The agreements with the stories about Hrolf may be explained in the same way by assuming that the form of the story here called the Icelandic version was told on the British Islands by Norsemen and thus influenced Celtic poetry. It must be admitted, however, that the resemblances are somewhat scattered; also, that we still know with certainty all too little of the history of Celtic traditions to be able to judge concerning their relation to Norse stories.

One particular episode of the Hrolfssaga calls to mind a historic occurrence. In the year 1016, Canute the Great summoned the powerful Uhtred, earl of Northumberland, to appear before him. A curtain was stretched through the king's hall and as the earl entered, his enemy Thorbrand rushed forth with many warriors and slew him together with forty of his men (Freeman, *The Norman Conquest*, i, 416). Still this event scarcely furnishes us more than an idea of the spirit of the times in which the story is told.

4. *The hawk Habrok and the dog Garm.* Common to both sagas is the story of how Hrolf's hawk Habrok is caged together with the thirty hawks of the Swedish king so that they shall claw him to death; but Habrok kills all of them. Of Garm we are told in the Hrolfssaga

that he rends a charmed boar sent against him by Athisl. One may be inclined to consider these elements late additions to the story; but it is well to recall that in the Elder Edda there are two lines saying that Habrok is the best of all hawks, Garm the best of all dogs.\* To be sure, these lines are of later origin. Still, they must have existed before the Elder Edda was collected and before the lay was used by Snorri in the preparation of his work. Accordingly, they were added in the eleventh or twelfth century; which is to say that at that time the Hrolfssaga was so highly esteemed that it was feasible to introduce famous names occurring in it by the side of the great ones of the Asaworld. It would seem, then, that the strong beasts of prey were associated with Hrolf kraki at a comparatively early time. Just as he is given a large company of berserkers to accompany him in war, likewise these animals are associated with him, personifying his heroic nature still more clearly.

The very fact that Hrolf is pictured with these warlike and heroic symbols is a new feature. Neither the Biarkamal nor the Danish stories are specific in this regard. The strong, fierce dog is the characteristic heroic animal in the Norn hero tales. Olaf Tryggvason has his hound Vigi who tears Thorir hjǫrtr (the Hart) who has changed himself to a stag; the dog Snati follows Gest Bartharson to the Giants' cave and participates in the battle that takes place there; Ole frœkni's dog fells one

\* C. 43; the reading Gramr in the seventeenth-century copies is of course only a mistake for Garmr. The correct form is seen in the *Grímnismál*, stanza 43, where Habrok and Garmr (but Gramr, in MS. A) are mentioned together (cf. A. Kock, *Arkiv*, xiv, 265; Kahle, *Indogerm. Forsch.*, xiv, 142 ff., 151).

of the robbers whilst his master kills the other; in Saxo's *Frithleifssaga*, Biörn's powerful dog fights by his side and helps the king to gain the victory.\* In these heroic legends from the early Middle Ages King Hrolf with his two animals Habrok and Garm suits very well.

There is still one more warlike motif in the legend of Hrolf. In Iceland the sword *Skofnung* plays a peculiar rôle. About the middle of the tenth century, Mithfiarthar-Skeggi owned it. He loaned it to Kormak for use in a holmgang, as is attested by contemporary Skaldic poems. Later, it was used in other combats and presented as a gift with the obligation of carrying out vengeance. When Thorkel Eyjolfsson was drowned, it was carried safely to land on a piece of timber. Gellir his son wore it when, in the middle of the eleventh century, he went on pilgrimage. On his journey home, he died and was interred at Roskilde: "since that time no one had *Skofnung*." Strange stories were current about it, about the magic properties it possessed, and "that it had been taken out of Hrolf kraki's burial mound." How early this latter story was connected with the sword is not known; very likely already when it was a famous heirloom in Iceland. At the beginning of the thirteenth century, the *Landnamabok* relates that Mithfiarthar-Skeggi, when on one of his viking expeditions, lay one day in the shelter of the coast of Zealand and broke into Hrolf kraki's tumulus. He took Hrolf's sword *Skofnung* from him and deprived Hialti of his axe, but

\* Odd Snorrason, *Ólafssaga Tryggvasonar* (1853), p. 36; *Bárðar saga snæfellsdass* c. 13-21; Saxo, pp. 368-370, 269. For a more detailed treatment of this motif and its presuppositions in Celtic poetry and civilization, cf. *Danmarks Helteedigtning*, ii, 291.

the sword Laufi he was not able to wrest from Biarki's hand. In this last mentioned form, the story glorifies the berserkers at the expense of the king; but it stands to reason that the very story that Skofnung had been Hrolf's sword is originally based upon the tradition of Hrolf as the heroic king.\*

There is thus preserved in Norn tradition a distinct picture of Hrolf as the warlike king with his berserkers about him as a larger, and his hawk, dog, and sword as a smaller circle which reflects his personal prowess. But this motif very evidently remained stationary some time before the Icelandic sagas were fixed in writing (about 1200). In the literary monuments we may observe only its decline, not its rise; as we know it, the partiality for Hrolf's warriors, especially for Biarki, is about to stifle interest in the king himself. Nevertheless, a reflection of his fame still lives in the phrase or fixed characterization applied to Hrolf that he is "the most glorious king of antiquity"—*hann var ágætastur fornkonunga*, as Snorri has it. In the larger Olafssaga, King Olaf the Saint is asked by the stranger Gest (i.e., Othin) who he would prefer to be among the kings of the olden times, and he replies that he would prefer to be like Hrolf kraki, barring that Hrolf was Heathen.†

We do not know just when this Hrolf type arose; but there is nothing in it that would indicate it to hark back

\* *Landnámabók* (1900), pp. 57-180; *Kormáks saga*, pp. 19 ff., stanzas 31 and 59; *Laxdælasaga* (1889), esp. p. 289: *enn hann hafði verið tekinn ór haugi Hrólfs kraka*; Hauk Valdísarson, *Íslendingadrápa*, 21 (Wísén, *Carmina Norræna*, p. 81).

† *Flateyrbók*, ii, 134. Cf. above (p. 361), where the later additions to the *Grímnismál* put his hawk and his dog in a line with the glorious possessions of the gods.

to Norn conceptions older than those obtaining during the latter end of the Viking Age. Thus *garmr* is the designation of the Skaldic language for a ravenous dog (earliest instance in the *Ynglingatal*). *Hábrok* as a name for a hawk seems established by the man's name *Hauk habrok* occurring in the tenth century. *Skofnungr* means 'the polished,' 'the shining' — the Skaldic language frequently uses the expression *skafin sverð* 'smooth-polished swords.' *Hrani* is a well-known name of Othin. We shall scarcely make a mistake in assuming the date of these traditions about *Hrolf* to be somewhere near the battle of *Stiklastad* (1030), when the *Biarkamal* played a great rôle.

## 2. THE BERSERKER TROOP AND THEIR NAMES

The reason for King *Hrolf* being surrounded by a close circle of his berserkers is to be sought in the fashion set in other and later cycles. The Norwegian King *Half* is followed on his viking expeditions by the twelve *Halfsrekkar* (*Half's warriors*). *Starkath* was in his youth among the eleven chosen ones who followed *Haki's* stern viking laws and was also, similarly, in later accounts one of the twelve vikings who accompanied *Vikar*.

The warriors of *Half* stand in a particularly close relation to *Hrolf* and his berserkers. They are always mentioned by way of comparison or contrast. This is most clearly the case in the so-called *Tókaþáttur* which is a kind of Nornagest story of the fourteenth century,\* composed solely for comparing the Norwegian and Dan-

\* *Flateyjarbók*, ii, 136. (Nornagest is the retrospective narrator of the *Völ-sung* legends.)

ish warriors. But the connection between the two sagas lies on the surface. Especially noticeable is the way in which the burning of Half is patterned after Hrolf's fall.\* It has generally been supposed that the traditions about Hrolf influenced the stories about King Half; but not all of the resemblances can be explained by this relation, and it is well known that in popular tradition there are cases of legends borrowing each from the other. As a case in point, the Hrolf tradition in its later stages (cc. 43-44) imitated the Half tradition in the episode where the berserkers break forth from the burning hall by bursting the walls. On the other hand, the twelve warriors of the Halfssaga with their characteristic laws certainly are not taken from the traditions about Hrolf. They belong to the bands of twelve warriors above mentioned which constitute the poetic viking association. In its Norn form, the story of Hrolf shows but a weak approximation to this type. In it, the characteristic duties of the viking organizations are but faintly seen in the maxim of the followers of Hrolf to flee neither fire nor steel.

On the whole, the traditions about Hrolf accommodate themselves to the general trend of Norn lore. If Half, the less renowned king of Horthaland, is followed by a band of chosen warriors, the famous king of Denmark certainly must have at least the same following.

The designation *berserkir* which is applied to Hrolf's twelve warriors, especially in the oldest prose sources, calls for a remark. Nowhere else in the heroic traditions

\* Cf. above, p. 171; also, S. Grundtvig, *Heroisk digtning*, p. 53.



do we find the word used in the same manner, but rather as denoting a troop of roving vikings. We may here see the influence of historic conditions. King Harold Hair-fair had in his service a troop of *berserkir* and *ulfheðnar* (berserkers, i.e., men wearing bearskins or wolfskins) — invincible warriors who were massed where the danger was greatest. Such a band, which may be trusted in whatsoever peril, we find precisely in the berserkers who accompany Hrolf to Upsala. In the later Icelandic monuments this conception has undergone considerable change. There the berserkers are a band of arrogant men inclined to violence, who rarely visit the king's hall and are driven away by Biarki. They exhibit the same characteristics as the *berserkir* of the Icelandic sagas do generally.

In this fashion a bodyguard of twelve grew to be an integral part of the story of Hrolf in Norn tradition, toward the end of the Viking Age, probably, and influenced to a certain extent by the poetic ideals of that period. Among the single members of the troop only Biarki and Hialti are older figures. All the others are entirely unknown in this connection and lack the deeds which would really link them with the Leire king.

We have not much more than their names to guide us in a study of their origin. These are preserved in the Hrolfssaga, partly also in the Prose Edda's excerpts from the Skíldungasaga, and in the Icelandic fragments of the Biarkamal:\*

\* *Fas.*, i, 100. (I have examined, in part, the readings of the names in the various MSS. In this, as in other respects, *Ms. i* [A. M. 285 4to, date 1654] proves to have the best forms); *Sn. Edda*, i, 394.

Hrómundr harði (H; Hárr enn harðgreipi, B),

Hrólfr skióthendi (skjótandi, B) \*

Svipdagr (H and E),

ok Beigaðr (H and E),†

ok Hvítserkr enn hvati (H and E),

Haklangr enn 6.,

Harðrefill enn 7.,

Haki enn frækni enn 8.,

Vǫttr enn mikli ofláti (variant: aflaði) (E:

Vǫttr, Véseti [variant: Viðseti]),

Starólfr ‡ hét enn 10.,

Hjalti enn hugprúði (H and E) enn 11.,

Bǫðvarr biarki (H and E) enn 12.

Some of these names remind one precisely of Danish warrior names in old traditions: *Hvítserkr* is not known elsewhere except as the son of *Ragnarr loðbrók*; *Vǫttr* is mentioned in the *Ynglingatal* as one of the earls of King Frothi, but is unknown elsewhere; *Véseti* is the name of the earl of Bornholm who figures in the *Jomsvikinga-saga*; the names *Haki* and *Beigaðr* occur associated in the *Lay of Ingiald* as followers of Starkath. The name *Beigaðr* is unknown as the name of a real person. Though the warriors of Hrolf cannot boast of many deeds of their own, they bear the names of strong and victorious warriors of Danish antiquity, which fact might contribute to shed lustre on them and their king. In the same fashion *Svipdagr* recurs as a Swedish warrior in the *Ynglinga* cycle. It may be noted that all these names are restricted to such as a Norn author might

\* In the *Hrolfss.*, p. 35 and in *Codex Regius* of the *Edda* written *Beigaðr*. E: þeir bræðr, S. ok B.

† In the *Hrolfss.* written *skjóthen(d)ti*.

‡ Some MSS.: *Starólfr enn rammi*; *d* has two persons here: *Starólfrur hærdr*, *Vlffur enn ramme*; *Stórólfrur*, i.

know.\* Some of them (*Vøttr* and *Hvitserkr*) do not occur anywhere in Danish tradition, and no name is found which is known in Danish but not in Icelandic lore.

The explanation no doubt is that these names are taken from the stock of those with which a Norwegian would be acquainted; and the same holds true of the other remaining names. *Harðrefill* is a new name, made up of Icelandic *Harðrefr* (*Landnama*) and the sea-king name *Refill* or *Ræfill*; *Haklangr* is the name of a Norwegian petty king who was an opponent of Harold Hairfair; *Starólf* recalls Icelandic *Stórólf* and *Stari*, one of the warriors of Half.†

Some of the berserkers bear epithets: *Hárr enn harðgreipi* (the hardgripping) and *Hrólf* *skjótendi* (the swift handed); furthermore, *enn hvati*, *ofláti*, *frækni* (the brisk, vain, brave) — names which serve but little to mark off their bearers from other warriors of Hrolf but are appropriate, rather, as titles of honor for the company as a whole. Both this and the many alliterations would point to the probability that this list of names originally was in a poetic form. We have in the Bravalla Lay such a list of warriors made up of all kinds of heroic names, and Hrolf's twelve berserkers are no doubt gotten together on the same principles. They are invented by some Norwegian or Icelandic skald.

We may, in a fashion, determine when this was done. The oldest testimony for their existence is the Biarka-

\* *Beigaðr* does not occur in Icelandic prose sources, but in the Bravalla Lay (where it is taken from the Danish Lay of Ingiald). It also served as model for the name *Geigaðr* in the story of Starkath's fight with King Huggleik.

† Of these, *Harðrefr* and *Refill* do not occur in Danish tradition. Neither does *Hárr*.

mal as it looked at Snorri's time; that is, at any rate, before the year 1200. The fact that but little legendary material surrounds the individual figures would argue against putting the date much further back. There is but one small group of stories about the warriors at the court of Athisl, which, moreover, as we shall presently see, is of quite recent origin. On the other hand, the names of the men in Hrolf's company can hardly have existed before 1066, when the Bravalla Lay was composed. In the lists of this lay we find mention of a great number of legendary heroes, and Hrolf's men would certainly have figured there if, indeed, they had existed at the time.\* That is, the list of Hrolf's men came into being somewhat later than 1066, and some time before 1200.

We may put the question more definitely: where did the list of Hrolf's warriors exist? It is to be assumed that it had some kind of poetic form, and that it formed part of the Icelandic text of the Biarkamal, for we possess a part of the list in a half stanza which has come down to us:

Hárr enn harðgreipi,  
Hrólfur skjótandi,  
ættumgóðir menn  
þeir ekki flýja.

Har the hard-gripping,  
Hrolf the bowman,  
Noble born men  
Who never flee.

And the other ten names would easily fill another stanza. It would seem probable, then, that these warrior names

\* Of the warriors of Hrolf, mention is made only of *Hialti* (l. 3, among Danish skalds) and of *Biarki* (l. 14, among picked Norwegians). For various reasons, into which I cannot enter here, *Beigastór* and *Haki* cannot be borrowed from the list of Hrolf's men, but from the Lay of Ingiald. (Cf. my text of the *Bravalla Lay* in *Danmarks Heltedigtning*, iii (forthcoming).

were not put together by two different skalds who lived at the same time and worked over the Biarkamal, but that the same Icclander who made a new version of the old lay also put together these names to incorporate them into the poem.

It is noteworthy in the case of this tradition that the names of the warriors may be exchanged in the course of time. *Hárr enn harðgreipi* alternates with *Hrómundr harði* (in H), *Vǫttr*, *Véseti* (in E) with *Vǫttr oflátí* (in H) — so little do they possess any individual traits. The explanation obviously is the fact that stories about the individual warriors do not exist. They only constitute an unmeaning register of names which is remembered more or less exactly.

Therefore, although the berserker troop as a whole is of considerable age in Norn tradition, the life of the individual warrior has neither distinguishing features nor certain outlines.

### 3. BOTHVAR'S BEARISH ORIGIN AND NATURE

The first traces of any story about Biarki existing in Norway are found about 1066, when the Bravalla Lay mentions him as a Norwegian. For a later time there exists a long account about his own experiences on Norwegian soil. This is found with trifling differences in the Hrolfssaga and the Biarkarimur. His father is a prince transformed into a bear. His brothers each in some way show their bearish origin. Bothvar himself, besides being of unusual strength, has the power to transform himself into a bear, as he does in his fight with Agnar and in the battle at Leire.

Having examined this cluster of stories elsewhere in detail,\* I shall at this place merely give a résumé of the history of the bear story.

It starts among the Danes in England. Sivard the Stout was a Danish chieftain who arrived in England during the reign of Canute the Great and became Earl of Northumberland, where he died in 1055. His memory lived on in a saga narrative which corresponds in a remarkable way to the romantic Icelandic sagas. We are told, among other things, that his father, Beorn Beresun, was the son of a savage bear and a woman whom he had carried off; "for Beresun means bear's son." This is a misunderstanding, however. His mother's name undoubtedly was Bera; but since *bera* also signifies a she-bear (but not he-bear) his name was interpreted as "bear's son" and a story made up which would do to explain Earl Sivard's massive build and uncommon strength.

The next step in the development is seen in this story being applied to Biarki. His colossal strength may have furnished the link. Moreover, there was probably also the impression among people that the very name of Biarki is related to "bear." Thus Biarki was given a mother who was called Bera and a father who was a bear.

But before our tradition had reached its final form, the bear story had developed much farther. This took place in the time when the motif of the transformation

\* Cf. my article *Sivard den digre, Arkiv f. n. Fil.*, xix, 199 ff. (= *Sivard Digri of Northumberland in the Saga Book of the Viking Club*, 1910; and esp. my *Studier over de islandske Skjoldungsagn*, in a forthcoming number of the *Aarbøger for Nordisk Oldkyndighed*.

by an evil stepmother came into the North and usurped a great place in the popular imagination. Propagated by ballads, and in no less degree by fairy tales introduced from abroad, it struck deep roots in native heroic poetry. We may trace its victorious course by the help of some scattered references; for it took some time before this and similar motifs attained literary rank in Iceland. But we know that King Sverrir of Norway (1184-1202) loved them and called them the most entertaining of all sagas; also, that the Icelandic shepherds about 1200 were engrossed in them. In the written literature, their influence is as yet barely perceptible toward the end of the thirteenth century (*Volsungasaga*, c. 8), until they became the fashion in native hero legends in the fourteenth century. Our story about Biarki accommodates itself to the general tastes of this period. The bear becomes a king's son whose name is Biorn and whom his wicked stepmother has changed into a bear, to avenge herself for his rejecting her love, and who is eventually killed by his own father and his men. We can unravel point for point the entire fairy tale material of which the story is composed. As concerns the tragic ending of the story, close parallels are seen in a Faroese ballad and a Lappish legend probably of Norwegian origin. The motif of the wolf glove with which the stepmother strikes the prince recurs in a Norwegian ballad. The story of the bear's son is another legendary motif. In our story the different degrees of bearishness which the fairy tales provide for the hero (viz., half his body that of a bear's, the ears of a bear) are distributed among the three sons of prince Bear; etc., etc. With the help of

still other motifs from sagas and fairy tales, the further career of the three brothers is built up — how each of them receives the weapon which is left for him and how the impress of Elgfrothi's heel in the rock serves him as a sign of Bøthvar's life. In the end the story has grown so as to make Bøthvar's brothers avenge his death, thus encroaching on the old legends of Hrolf in which this is Viggi's rôle.

This whole long story about Bøthvar cannot now, with the monuments at our disposal, be traced outside of Iceland unless, indeed, the Faroese ballad is an offshoot from this stock. Nevertheless its home scarcely was there. Literary tendencies did not favor the story there till later times. And the fact that nearly all the folklore elements of which it is composed are represented much more fully in Norway also disproves that supposition. Only in the last working over did Icelandic tradition play any rôle in it.

It is still more difficult to determine the age of the story. The first versions we know are seen in the *Hrolfssaga* and the *Biarkarimur*, which date from the fourteenth century. The *Skiöldungasaga* (from the thirteenth century) knows at least one of its motifs, viz., Bøthvar's ability to assume animal shape, and his Norwegian origin. However, the story of Bøthvar must have existed already about 1150 as a somewhat full narrative, since the saga of the Swedish warrior *Svipdag* is a later story based on it as a model. The fiction of a bearish origin must therefore have been attributed to Bøthvar *biarki* about the end of the eleventh century.



Traces of the Biarki legend in northern England are to be seen, not only in the use of the names Boduvar Berki mentioned above (p. 256), but probably also in passages borrowed from it into the Northumbrian hero legend of Hervard. The following episodes have been pointed out in this connection: (1) Hervard kills a great bear and is then received into the bodyguard of the king. (2) He overcomes a stranger (Cymric) warrior who wants to marry the king's daughter by force. Moreover there occurs in the story a definite reference to the legend of Biarki and the bear: he killed that bear which, with a maiden he had carried off, begot "the Norwegian king's son Biern." \* It must be admitted, however, that the parallel with Agnar's fight is altogether dependent on the correctness of some hypothetical forms of the legend, and thus by no means established.† On the other hand an influence from Biarki's bear fight is much more likely, especially as it is demonstrable that the scribe knew the story of Biarki. Still, the most decisive feature, the drinking of the blood, is lacking.

As a lively and entertaining narrative, the story of Bøthvar ranks very high. The motif of his bearish nature in particular is finely made use of to vary the shifting scenes of the battle about Leire, as indeed, this one fundamental motif has been developed into a wealth of interesting episodes. The story is not to be judged solely on the basis of the existing versions which show certain epic defects and which are open to criticism for their not being able to weld into a consistent whole the older and more matter-of-fact tradition about Hrolf with the motley scenes in which Bøthvar is the sole centre. On the other hand it is not to be denied that the ornate form of the story as we have it does not compare in lasting beauty with the ideal endeavor that shines in the stanzas of the Biarkamal; or with the joy

\* Deutschbein, *Studien zur Sagengeschichte Englands*, 1906, i, 249 ff.

† This is also the opinion of Heusler, *Die Anfänge der isländischen Sage*, 1914, p. 29.

in the life of the king's men which characterizes the Danish legends; or with the broad, simple lines of the expedition to Upsala in the Norn tradition. Richer than these in imaginative detail, but less firmly grounded in real life, it makes the transition from heroic poetry proper to the short story and the fairy tale.

#### 4. SVIPDAG AND HVITSERK

"The brothers Svipdag, Beigath, and Hvitserk" are represented in all Icelandic sources as those of the warriors of Hrolf who come next after Biarki and Hialti. The first trace of their existence is found in the *Hattalykill* (about 1145), which mentions Svipdag among famous chieftains of old. The territory where these heroes certainly were known is limited to Iceland and, perhaps, also the Orkneys. At any rate there is this one poem on which an Icelandic skald collaborated.\* It may, of

\* The *Háttalykill* was composed by the Orkney Earl Rognvald kali and the Iclander Hall before 1158 (when the earl died); possibly even before 1148 (when the earl departed for the Holy Land; cf. Finnur Jónsson, *Oldn. lit. hist.*, ii, 35 ff.; see *Skjaldedigtning*, i, 492). I here print the two stanzas which deal with Svipdag (l. 12, ab). The text is badly corrupted and is given with several provisional emendations by Jónsson and myself.

Segja kannk Svipdags	Hildi vakti [hildingr].
sögu, "er frá gram" . . . ;	hildar vas sá gramr mildr.
es mér sagt söguligt	þvíat hildi [halda
frá sögu þeirri;	hildi-] frœkn vildi;
auðlingr gæðisk útrauðr	hjalmar kendu hjalmsvond,
auðbjóðr þjóðum,	hjalma beit snarpr malmr,
auðar lét auðbrjótr	en hilm[i]r hjalms [jalm]
auðit þeims sverð rauð.	hjalm [tamið]r framði.

I.e., "I can tell of Svipdag's saga, I have been told in a saga-like manner (interestingly) about that saga; gladly the atheling became a gold distributor to the people; the breaker of rings granted gold to him who reddened sword. Fight did the fighter raise, generous was the lord with fight, for fight was desired by the one bold in fight, the helmets got the helmwand (sword) to feel, the keen steel bit the helmets, but the helm-accustomed (?) chieftain furthered the helm-crash (battle)." This Svipdag must be Hrolf's man. No

course, be merely an accident that we hear of these heroes so late and from so small a territory; but there is also the possibility that they did not exist earlier. The question must be answered by the internal evidence of the legend.

The *Skiöldungasaga* originally contained an account which we now know only through the brief references of *Arngrim*: the Swedish hero *Hvitserk* performs the great deed of slaying six warriors in one bout. He receives *Hrolf's* daughter *Drifa* in marriage, whilst *Bothvar* is rewarded with his other daughter, *Skur*. The *Biarkarimur*, which also uses the *Skiöldungasaga* as its source, contains a lengthy narrative about these happenings: *Hvitserk* is the oldest and bravest of the three sons of the freeholder *Svip*. He rides to *Upsala*, breaks through the palisade, and fells the first two warriors who oppose him. On the next day he is challenged to fight the whole company of berserkers, one after the other. He slays five of them; the others are dismissed from the castle by King *Athisl* because they are not able to overcome him. But the berserkers gather an army and make an incursion into the kingdom. *Hvitserk* is sent out against them with but a small host and would have perished had not his father had a presentiment of the danger threatening him and sent his brothers to help

other hero of that name figures as main person in any other story, and it would seem a most improbable assumption that he was a legendary figure unknown to us; for the personages occurring in the *Hattalykill* correspond in every instance to those whom we know from the hero legends of Icelandic literature. The expressions used about him would, to be sure, lead one to think that he was some king; but the description of persons in this lay is very stereotyped, so the expressions may also refer to some chieftain of warriors. Still further, his place directly after *Hvitserk* and at the transition to the *Scylding* traditions argues him to be the *Svipdag* of the *Hrolfssaga*.

him. His life is saved, but he has lost one of his eyes and is covered with wounds. We are given to understand that this had been a stratagem of Athisl against him; so Svipdag leaves Upsala castle in order to enter the service of Hrolf.

The Hrolfssaga has a closely similar account. Only, Svipdag here is the youngest of the three brothers. He journeys to Upsala, breaks down the palisade, is challenged by the twelve berserkers, and fells four of them in single combat. The berserkers attempt an attack during the night, but one of them falls, and Athisl, who himself had egged them on, has to send them away from his palace. The battle happens just as in the Biarkarimur. Old Svip wakens from his dreams and tells his two other sons that their brother Svipdag is sorely pressed and has lost one eye. They arrive in time to save his life and win the victory. In other respects this narrative is characteristic for the stress laid on Queen Yrsa's participation in the events. With her own men she protects Svipdag, and later heals his wounds. When Svipdag arrives in Leire castle he must undergo the test of prowess along with the first of Hrolf's berserkers.

What is remarkable in these two versions and, indeed, without a parallel among the heroic legends, is the fact that the hero has now this, now that name. What one source relates about Hvitserk, the other tells about Svipdag, so little personal are the adventures of the hero. Name and scenes are not inseparably connected; the characters are remembered as "the three brothers Hvitserk, Beigath, and Svipdag."

As regards the events here narrated, they contain great deeds, greater even than those of 'the famous Starkath, as Arngrim observes; but there is no one really characteristic scene. The company of warriors in the king's hall who are hostile to the newcomer and who acquiesce only when he has slain one of them, is an old acquaintance from Biarki's story. King Athisl's inciting his berserkers to attack the stranger, but pretending to know nothing about it, is a repetition from Hrolf's visit in Upsala. The same is true of Queen Yrsa's help. In other words, the Svipdag story is not of independent origin but rather an echo.

As the story is told in the Icelandic sources we cannot help detecting this. The conflict between the new arrival and the old warriors is told no less than four times in the Hrolfssaga, twice about Svipdag and twice about Biarki. The motif is that of two brothers who in a supernatural manner become aware that the hero is in danger and come to his help and are now the bear's sons, now those of Svipdag. In this case it is possibly the sons of Svip who are the original. The theme has been imported into the saga of Bøthvar biarki at the expense of older motifs about Hrolf kraki. The contact of the legends of Svipdag and Bøthvar evidently was productive of similar episodes. Still we cannot doubt for one moment that the Biarki legends are the more original of the two, and the Swedish heroes an echo.

The cause which contributed to the composition of the Svipdag story surely was not due to any fresh impulse, but rather to geographic considerations. In Biarki the saga had a Norwegian representative, in

Hialti, a Danish one. There was the necessity of having the remaining third of the North represented in the same fashion so that all Scandinavian lands might send their chief warriors to Hrolf kraki, "the greatest of the kings of old."

In all probability the author was some Icelandic saga teller. This is indicated by the orderly and well considered composition of the saga. All details as well as the characteristic art in bringing the persons in contact with one another bespeak Icelandic story telling. The skill of the narrator is seen in the trick of using the identical motive time and again without letting the repetition pall on the audience. The supernatural is no more in evidence than in most Icelandic sagas; in fact, is restricted to the father being warned by a dream of his son's danger. The only apparently new motif, the one-eyedness of the hero, is borrowed from one of the few Swedish legendary heroes known to the Icelanders, Svipdag the Blind in the Ynglingasaga.

In a word, the story of Svipdag is a characteristically Icelandic addition to the old Danish Scylding legends. Of late origin, it bears the stamp more than they of the romancer's pleasure in telling a story, rather than of the realistic art of heroic poetry proper.

The real hero of the story is doubtless Svipdag. This would seem to follow from the fact that he is associated (in his one-eyedness) with *Svipdagr blindi*, that his father's name is Svip, and that he is regarded as the chief hero in our oldest source, dating from the middle of the twelfth century.

The story is scarcely older than about 1150. This agrees well with the expression used by the poet of the

Hattalykill: " I can tell about Svipdag's history, I have been told in an interesting fashion of that saga " (*er mér sagt söguligt frá sögu þeirri*). If the saga is proclaimed to be interesting to listeners in the hall of the Orkney earl, the meaning is no doubt that it is not known from old, but will be of interest because of its novelty.

The Hattalykill gives us a very remarkable insight into the life of the hero legends on the Orkneys. The earl himself and his Icelandic follower are composing a *drápa* in honor of the famous heroes of old whilst noble ladies lend a willing ear. Among the stories known in this circle, also the " interesting " one about Svipdag is to be found. The question occurs to one whether this centre of traditions in which we first hear of the Svipdag legend is not also its place of origin. Perhaps some Icelandic saga teller, or some Orkney Islander who acquired the art, made the old Hrolfssaga still more interesting by incorporating into it this romantic and thrilling story.

This is, then, the last independent shoot from the old trunk of the Hrolf legends. Toward the beginning of Icelandic saga-writing the entirely opposite tendency is seen: the legends are clipped and pruned and their projecting branches bent so as to remove contradictions in the sources and to make events dovetail, in order to present a historically probable narrative. The thoroughness with which this is carried out in the *Langfeðgatál* and the *Skiöldungasaga* is evidence of the fact that at that time creative ability and the unconscious living in and with the heroic legend had ceased.

## CHAPTER VIII

### SCYLD

#### 1. SCYLD AS PROGENITOR OF THE ROYAL RACE

**W**E have now traced the largest cycle of Scylding legends and its most famous figures in their gradual development from a historic basis — the events of a stirring period — into a series of multifarious and highly imaginative traditions of a purely poetic nature, and finally even into stories showing all the characteristics of a fairy tale. We shall now turn our attention to the most ancient and most obscure of the Scyldings, the King Scyld after whom the whole race is supposed to be named.

Here even more than elsewhere it is imperative that we realize very clearly what the sources contain and how they ought to be used. For up to the present time, investigators have been only too eager to supply guesses and theories for what is lacking. The principle by which we must unswervingly abide is that we must first of all be sure of what is common to all traditions; then, that we appreciate in its inner poetic consistency every single statement concerning his life, and determine its value on the basis of the interpretation of the figure of Scyld and of heroic life as a whole which obtained in the times concerned.

To be exact, the various sources agree only in assigning the name Scyld to the ancestor of the royal race.



Thus the epic of Beowulf opens with the story of his life. In all Icelandic sources he figures as the progenitor of the race and as the first king of Leire. Among the Danish sources, Sven Aggison claims this distinction for him, expressly appealing to old tradition.\* This conception, may, then, be traced throughout the extent of the Scylding legend, and everywhere in the best sources. An exception is made only in the scattered information of the Danish chronicles of the Valdemar period and later times which know nothing of Scyld but make Dan the progenitor; and in the long Anglo-Saxon genealogy which inserts Scyld somewhere in the middle of the line. These nationally limited conceptions are to engage our attention presently. It is sufficient to emphasize that they cannot change our opinion as to Scyld's place in the traditions as a whole.†

But this is as far as the agreements go. The accounts of his life given in the sources are altogether at variance. The English tradition has it that Scyld came to his kingdom as a babe, alone on a ship, and that he left it after his death in the same manner. Danish legends tell of his combats; how, when a boy, he muzzles a bear, and how he afterwards slays stranger warriors

\* *Illum igitur (nunc) nostra (primum) relexit oratio, quem priscorum annositas jugi primum commendavit memoria. Skiold Danis didici primum præfuisse.* Cf. in his introduction: *quantum ab annosis et veteribus certa valui inquisitione percontari.* (Sven Aggisson's *værker*, ed. Gertz (1915), p. 49; *SRD*, 1, p. 44).

† *Dan* is mentioned as the first king in the Leire Chronicle; in Abbot William's defective series, and in the *Catalogus* so often agreeing with him; furthermore in the ballad of *Dansk kongetal* (The Line of Danish kings; on which see the author's *Saksas oldhistorie*, i, p. 99). Saxo has Dan and his sons head the list, with Scyld immediately following; — which is, probably, his own attempt to reconcile the two conceptions.

and thus wins the fair Alfhild and makes the Saxons tributary to him. In addition, a few laws are ascribed to him. The Icelanders make him the son of Othin and tell how he migrated from a far-away Asgarth, together with his father, and settled at Leire. Snorri has him marry the goddess Gefion.

Some of these traits are mutually exclusive. His arriving alone on board a ship cannot be reconciled with the immigration of the Æsir. Still, a considerable part of the material might well be united into a connected story about Scyld; thus, one may imagine the son of Othin arriving on a ship and afterwards performing the various deeds ascribed to him. Only, there would be this difficulty that we have not the least assurance that such a combined story of his life ever did exist. We know with certainty only that the various sources embrace altogether different conceptions of the progenitor. He is thought of, now, as a heroic figure, alone on the ship; now, only as some great warrior. It is to no purpose to try to unite the two into one person. It is the peculiarity of the Scyld legend that it lives on through many centuries but has altogether different contents in different times. We must try to obtain an explanation of this, and we must also get at the root of the many traits which crop up time and again.

First of all, however, we must emphasize those which are common to all; his rank as the first in the line of the Scyldings, and his purely warlike character. The description of him in *Beowulf* is warlike from first to last:

Oft Scyld the Seefing from squadroned foes,  
from many a tribe, the mead-bench tore,

(that is, snatched the joy of life from them, slew them).

And again:

. . . he waxed under welkin, in wealth he throve,  
till before him the folk, both far and near,  
who house by the whale-path, heard his mandate,  
gave him gifts.

At his death he charges his warriors to lay his body on the ship with the same equipment of jewels and arms he had when he in his childhood had come from the sea. In this source it is fighting, victory, weapons which fill all his life. Saxo's Danish legend strikes the same warlike note: his bear fight and his victory over the strong warriors "Attalus" and "Scatus." To start with, his chronicle contained no more than this about him, but later on there was added a piece which praises him for excelling also in the occupations of peace. The contents of this part, however, are rather slender and altogether without the characteristics of ancient legendary material. Besides, of the two laws ascribed to Scyld, the one referred to is of warlike contents. Sven Aggison merely says that the name of Scyld (*Skjold* = shield) was given him because he defended Denmark's boundaries.

The contents of his warrior's life may be diverse, either expressed in general poetic terms, as in *Beowulf*, or pictured in so many heroic exploits, as in Saxo. But his character remains essentially the same. It is worth while to emphasize this, since all earlier investigators have dwelt on the idyl of the child sleeping with a sheaf of grain under his head (which the sources do not allow us to associate with Scyld) and have on this

basis given his character an entirely different interpretation.

As a third point in common we may mention a certain rather vague relation to the foundation of a Danish kingdom. Definite reference to this is made only by the Icelanders whose sagas have him make his residence in Leire; indeed, they think of all succeeding rulers of Denmark as Leire kings. Sven Aggison mentions Scyld's defense of Denmark's boundaries, just as he dwells on the fights made by other kings of antiquity to protect the realm. This defense of the boundary is, for that matter, more prominent in other Danish sources which make Dan the progenitor of the race, and by Sven the motif is certainly connected with his personal interest in the defense of the realm. When Saxo relates how Scyld makes the Germans tributary to him, this may be understood as his laying the foundations of the later Danish rule; for in the legendary world of Saxo, the subjugation of the southern neighbors is so steadily recurring a feature that it may be said to belong to the heroic past of Denmark. In *Beowulf*, Scyld is said to have made tributary all peoples "beyond the whale-road." This may mean that he established the later Danish empire with all its islands and coastlands; but it is quite as possible that the poet only means to have him make tributary the Baltic littoral in general. At any rate, his warlike career certainly is conceived as an introduction to the great kingdom of the Danes whose flower is seen in the court life in the hall Heorot. In all sources we meet with rather vague expressions about his foundation of a Danish kingdom or the work of

solidifying or extending the boundaries of the realm; but the individual features are in every case seen to be borrowed from the later legends of the Scyldings.

Thus the entire body of traditions about Scyld is characterized by their having reference to the chief personages in the Scylding family. We shall have occasion to observe this same dependence in a number of the individual legends.

## 2. SCYLD ON THE SHIP

There is one legend about Scyld, at any rate, which marks him off from other heroic figures. It is the story of his coming on a ship and his departure in the same manner. Only the English sources have preserved this legend, in fact only Beowulf. It is told as follows:

Lo, praise of the prowess of people-kings  
of spear-armed Danes,\* in days long sped,  
we have heard, and what honor the athelings won!  
Oft Scyld the Scefing † from squadroned foes,  
from many a tribe, the mead-bench tore,  
awing the earls. Since erst he lay  
friendless, a foundling, fate repaid him:  
for he waxed under welkin, in wealth he throve,  
till before him the folk, both far and near,  
who house by the whale-path, heard his mandate,  
gave him gifts: a good king he!

To him an heir was afterward born,  
a son in his halls, whom heaven sent  
to favor the folk, feeling their woe  
that erst they had lacked an earl for leader  
so long a while; the Lord endowed him,

\* Thus the most recent translators; but would it not be preferable, as more consonant with the style of Beowulf, to understand the two words as merely appositional: "the spear-armed kings, the people-kings, prowess?"

† As to Scefing, cf. p. 389, and p. 396 ff.

the Wielder of Wonder, with world's renown.  
 Famed was this Beowulf: far flew the boast of him,  
 son of Scyld, in the Scandian lands.\*  
 So becomes it a youth to quit him well  
 with his father's friends, by fee and gift,  
 that to aid him, aged, in after days,  
 come warriors willing, should war draw nigh,  
 liegemen loyal: by lauded deeds  
 shall an earl have honor in every clan.

Forth he fared at the fated moment,  
 Sturdy Scyld, to the shelter of God.  
 Then they bore him over the ocean's billow  
 loving clansmen, as late he charged them,  
 while wielded words the winsome Scyld,  
 the leader beloved who long had ruled.  
 In the roadstead rocked a ring-dight vessel,  
 ice-flecked, outbound, atheling's barge:  
 there laid they down their darling lord  
 on the breast of the boat, the breaker-of-rings,  
 by the mast the mighty one. Many a treasure  
 fetched from far was freighted with him.  
 No ship have I known so nobly dight  
 with weapons of war and weeds of battle,  
 with breastplate and blade: on his bosom lay  
 a heaped hoard that thence should go  
 far o'er the flood with him floating away.  
 No less these loaded the lordly gifts,  
 thanes' huge treasure, than those had done  
 who in former times forth had sent him  
 sole on the seas, a suckling child.  
 High o'er his head they hoist the standard,  
 a gold-wove banner; let billows take him,  
 gave him to ocean. Grave were their spirits,  
 mournful their mood. No man is able  
 to say in sooth, no son of the halls,  
 no hero 'neath heaven, — who harbored that freight! †

\* *Scodelandum* in.

† Tr. Gummere, *The Oldest English Epic*.

We have here another poetic treatment of the Scylding legends. It contains much of interest for us, both concerning the outlines of the legend in the earliest times and concerning the interpretation of this material by the individual poet.

It will be plain at once that Scyld's life as described here contains two chief events: his arrival on a ship as a little child, and his departure in a similar manner. It is the latter scene which has inspired the poet most strongly. The former seems to have less actuality for him, for he tells of the coming of the child in but a very few words, leaving us to divine the details from the allusions contained in his description of Scyld's last journey. This is sufficient indication that the material has undergone a strong adaptation to the poet's own mood, the sad admiration for the heroic life that now is vanished, a note so often struck in Anglo-Saxon poetry.

Even more remarkable is the result of a comparison between the two accounts of Scyld's arrival, the direct one in the first lines of the epic and the one alluded to in its description of the last journey. The allusion suggests a royal child in all his magnificence, arriving on a splendid ship, lying by the mast, surrounded by weapons and the most precious jewels, with a golden banner waving over his head. The direct story shows an absolute contrast to the former picture: the babe is a poor foundling:

. . . erst he lay  
friendless, a foundling . . .

and only when grown did he receive compensation for the hardship suffered during his youth. Also from the

epic point of view the poet conceives of him as the foundling, the cast off child of human parents. Just as in so many other stories of foundlings it is only the people of the country adopting him who do not know of his origin; the poet and his listeners know his birth and that he is a Scefing, i.e., a son or descendant of Scef.\* We have here, then, a regular foundling story: an exposed child, most often of exalted parentage, is found and raised, without his birth becoming known, and is finally made king. In this direct narrative, only those characteristic details are lacking which describe how the child is found; for if the poet had told them here they would have disturbed the picture of the child's helplessness which he wishes to produce in our minds.

If we start with the description of the child's coming which is alluded to, the picture changes radically. The legend then carries out the resemblance between the child's arrival and the dead king's departure. The feeling with which we behold the hero of tender age on his royal ship surrounded by jewels and weapons, is not sympathy but wondering admiration. He is not cast off, not a foundling, but is sent with precisely that equipment which designates him as the future king of the land. A few lines give still further information about Scyld's coming. We are told that to Scyld was born a son; God sent him as a consolation for the people, because they had been without a king for a long time.

\* Many scholars have interpreted *Scyld Scefing* as "Scyld the son of the sheaf"; but this interpretation does not fit in *Beowulf* where the sheaf of grain does not occur again at his departure and he is represented merely as a warlike hero (B. ten Brink, *Beowulf*, p. 195).



This time "without a king" must precede Scyld's accession, but is certainly conceived to have an epic connection with his life. The Danes are hard bestead because they lack a ruler, when the child sent to them by supernatural powers arrives as a helper in their need. The babe which is sent as the ruler of a helpless people is the very strongest contrast to the conception of him as a foundling. His last journey is made into the land of the unknown, "(they) gave him to ocean," "no hero 'neath heaven (knows) who harbored that freight." For this reason he must also come from unknown and mysterious regions. To have him originate among the one or the other of the neighbor nations of the Danes, in King Scef's land, would have been as unsatisfactory as to let the dead king's ship strand on some neighboring shore; for the dead king's equipment, embracing all with which he before arrived in the land, presupposes a conception about some journey home.\*

Confirmation of our having drawn the correct outlines of the legend from the hints in Beowulf is found in another quarter. Æthelweard, an English chronicler of the tenth century, gives a long genealogy, adding the remark concerning its progenitor: "This Scef came

\* Although the legend about Scyld's coming is found only in allusions, there seems to be no important difference of opinion about it among scholars, ever since the time when N. F. S. Grundtvig in 1817 discovered its connection. The interregnum is undoubtedly supposed to have come about through the death of evil King Heremod (Grein, Heyne, Sievers). One may hardly, from the fact that the name of *Scyldingas* is brought into connection with his realm and his people (lines 919, 1709), draw the conclusion that he was a member of the Scylding dynasty; for this would create serious difficulties in the rôle which is assigned him. *Scyldingas* was for the poet a regular poetical synonym for "Danes." (Beowulf übersetzt von Gering (1906), p. 106; cf. Lawrence, *Mod. Lang. Notes*, xxv, 156).

sailing with a warship to an island in the ocean which is called 'Scani,' surrounded with weapons: he was a boy of tender age, entirely unknown to the inhabitants of that land; yet they received him and nourished him with care, finally electing him their king." \* I shall not, for the time being, discuss whether Scef or Scyld is the one properly entitled to this legend, but shall only refer to its contents. It is the same legend, down to details. Here is the tender infant on the ship (*valde recens puer = umbor wesende, féasceaft*); he arrives from the unknown, and is not only "unknown to the people of that land" but also to the narrator. There is also the first mysterious origin of the long line of kings; the warship (*drumo*) corresponds to the royal ship with the golden banner, the weapons surrounding the child appear in both as the most distinctive thing about him; what is dwelt on with poetic elaboration in Beowulf is here stated with matter-of-fact but definite words.† Even the scene of action is the same. Scef lands in Scania, Scyld in the land of the Danes, belonging to Scedenig or Scedeland (Scandinavia). Very possibly, Scadinavia, Scedenig, Scani are merely different forms of the same name. At all events, they are easily mistaken for one another.‡ If Æthel-

\* *Ipsæ Scef cum uno drumone advectus est in insula Oceani, quæ dicitur Scani, armis circumdatus, eratque valde recens puer et ab incolis illius terræ ignotus; attamen ab eis suscipitur, et ut familiarem diligenti animo custodierunt, et post in regnum eligunt, de cujus prosapia ordinem trahit Athulf rex. (Æthelsordi Chronica, lib. iii.)*

† Only the treasures are not expressly mentioned besides the weapons; in so far, then, Scef is equipped only for his mission as the great warrior chieftain. But in the world of heroic poetry a great warrior chieftain is likely to be conceived as king also.

‡ Throughout the older literature, Scedenig and Skaney are taken to be identical. Cf. however, Hjalmar Lindroth in *Namn och bygd*, iii, 10-28. But even if Scadinavia = Scedenig and Skaney are not originally identical

weard uses the Northern form *Scani* his source must have contained an older Anglo-Saxon form, doubtless *Scedenig*, i.e., the same which occurs in the Scylding legend of the epic.\* The similarity between Æthelweard and Beowulf goes so far that he mentions quite drily the salient heroic features of the epic, besides underscoring, or adding, the details which correspond to the foundling story: although unknown to the inhabitants of the country yet the child was received and raised by them, and afterwards elected king.

Small wonder then that the foundling theme is likely to influence the Scyld legend, for it is the conventional legendary theme which is, moreover, so frequently exemplified in real life. Its very first situation, of the babe surrounded by weapons, corresponds to the general heroic conception that the hero finds his life's task when scarcely out of the cradle. Helgi Hundingsbani "stands clad in armor when one night old"; likewise Memering of the Danish ballad, who bears the heavy byrnie before he has learned to walk, Sigmund presents his little son with a sword at his "name-fastening"; the Norse vikings laid a sword in front of their new-born man children.† The infant Scyld is not at all cast off

they may practically — in popular tradition — have been conceived as one name.

\* Beowulf, 19: *blád wíde sprang*  
*Scyldes eafera*  
*Scedelandum in;*

line 1686 (about Hrothgar) *þæm sēlestan . . . þára þe on Scedenigge sceatas dælde*; cf. Müllenhoff, *Beowulf*, p. 6.

† *Helgakviða*, i, st. 7; *Danm. gamle Folkeviser*, no. 14; Ibn Dustah's description in V. Thomsen, *Ryska rikets grundläggning genom Skandinaverna* (1882), p. 34. The author intends to treat this subject more fully in *Danmarks Heltedigtning*, vol. iv.

but, on the contrary, is pointed out by his equipment as the future hero. Observe also the remarkable circumstance that there exist beings — though not definitely referred to in the legend — who have given him this wonderful equipment and also have the power to guide the ship mysteriously to the country where he will win fame. At this point we exceed the limits of human powers: they who watch over the child are supernatural beings. And finally there is his mysterious homeland! The ship transports the dead king beyond the seas to the unknown. But the unknown is, in this connection, the life hereafter into which the departed is welcomed but which no living man may enter, that is, the land of the dead or the land of immortality. Hence it is a world beyond which has sent him on his mission; its divine inhabitants have equipped him, have guided him on his way over the sea to the scene of his manhood career, and finally direct his return journey homeward. But what is the reason for his coming from the world beyond, like some divine revelation among men? No particular superhuman deed is attributed to Scyld or Scef in the legend; for to slay warriors and to make tributary the neighboring lands is not beyond the power of other heroes. His single special mission is to become the progenitor of a race. It is the glory and the greatness of the race, and at the same time an explanation of its gifts, that it has a divine ancestor who came to the land of men to found a kingdom and a royal race; and for this reason also he leaves this world when his task is accomplished; for that was his mission. Not the founding, but the hero from the world beyond is the key to the legend.

Some of my readers may suggest at this point that he was Othin's son; but I am more wary about this. The Anglo-Saxon tradition, elsewhere so exceedingly ready to proclaim heroes to be the sons of Othin, says nothing of the kind about Scyld or Scef. In Icelandic literature, to be sure, Skiold is Othin's son; but, as we shall presently see, such peculiar conditions obtain with respect to this relation that we are not justified in attributing it to other sources without having definite reasons therefor. Indeed, what would be gained in so doing? The arrival of the royal child on his ship does not fit into the conception, current in the North, of the relation of Valhalla and Asgarth to the world of men; and from a purely poetic point of view the indefinite character of the child's home is of much greater advantage: it is the land of the unknown, the world of the hereafter, of the gods, or of the fairy tale, beyond the seas. It is likely enough that more definite conceptions of a world of the gods have contributed to the origin of the legend; but in the form we know it, it contains only a maritime population's belief in a distant, ideal world beyond the sea. Just this indefiniteness contributes to the effect of the legend; for the less definite one's ideas about his origin, the more powerful is the impression of the hero of tender age with his royal ship and his treasures.

Surveying the English forms of the legend from the point of view thus gained we may feel gratified that its firm epic structure is, on the whole, unimpaired; at the same time we cannot deny, that the modernizing hand is strongly in evidence. The two scenes of his coming

and his departure which so closely belong together and which, together, lend the legend its mythical grandeur are about to become separated. In Æthelweard's chronicle, the first part is preserved rather well, the latter is lacking. In *Beowulf*, only the scene of Scyld's departure is given its full poetic setting, whereas the splendid royal ship which brought the child to the land is not mentioned, and the poet has begun to build a humble hut out of its remains, as it were, for the use of his foundling.

What circumstance is it then which destroyed the legend? It is the inability to face the mythical, fairy tale-like motif squarely and let a world of wonders open up before us to send its hero on his mission and call him back afterwards. Under the pressure of a rationalizing tendency and with a feeling of pity, instead of admiration, one is able to see in the child only the foundling, and in the departing king only a ruler mourned by his people: the bond which had held the double motif together is broken.

In *Beowulf* it is sympathy with the hero which fills the poet's soul. Although he intends to sing the glory of the Scylding race, he looks with compassion on its origin, the child of tender age who travels alone over the sea. The lyric pathos of his gift influences him to make the scene of departure the main contents of the lay. The ancestral legend told by the chronicler, on the other hand, yields somewhat more slowly to the conception of a foundling; it has, we realize, less personal poetic coloring but rather the aim merely to narrate the legendary features handed down.

## 3. SCYLD AND SCEAF

In the above, the main lines of the figure of Scyld in the Scylding cycle have been made clear; he is not the foundling but the old, mythic-heroic figure heading the illustrious race. He occurs in connection with that form of the legend which essentially reproduces the historic — or at any rate historically colored — events from the period of the Migration of Nations. This does not, however, exhaust all the problems set by the legend. I shall now briefly dwell on these subsidiary problems, referring in general to the more detailed treatment given them in Book I of *Danmarks Heltedigtning*.\*

There is, first, the circumstance that both Scyld and Sceaf are credited by the sources with the ownership of the legend of the babe coming to the land on a ship.

There are two sides to the problem: Sceaf may be regarded as a figure in the race of the Scyldings, but also as a separate personage. As to the former, the sources show the following succession of forms: (1) Oldest source (*Beowulf*, about 700?): Scyld arrives as a babe on board a ship; Sceaf is linked with him only genealogically as his father or ancestor. (2) Second oldest source (*Æthelweard's chronicle*, A.D. 973): On a warship and surrounded by arms the child Sceaf arrives on the island of Scani and is elected king by the people. (3) Youngest source (*William of Malmesbury*, twelfth century): Sceaf comes on a ship propelled without rowers, sleeping with his head on a sheaf of grain, to the island of Scandza; "when grown up he sat as king in the city

\* The following chapter is a brief résumé of c. 37 and 38 of vol. i, and of c. 38 of vol. ii, of *Danmarks Heltedigtning*.

which was then called Slaswich, but the land is called Old Anglia." Of these forms of the legend the first has, as it were, necessarily given rise to the others: once Scaef has been made the progenitor, the logic of the matter demands that it be he who sails over the seas from unknown lands. And the transformation of (2) into (3) depends on the heroic equipment with arms being exchanged for the sheaf of grain more akin to a story of a foundling: thus one has examples from all manner of lands of foundlings who were named for some circumstance connected with their finding (here *scéaf*, "sheaf of grain"). It is remarkable that all sources (the youngest source possibly following some written legend) cling to the Northern scene of action which is even definitely named (Scedeland; Scani; Skandza) and that only in the last stage an attempt in the manner of chroniclers is made to refer him to the (supposed) home of the Anglians. The successive stages of the development are thus made plain, and our result gives us a certain right to pursue the same lines in the opposite direction; back to a time when the heroic conception of the legend existed but the thin genealogical thread had not yet been spun — that is, to a time when Scyld came from the world beyond, without Scaef as father.

Another problem is Scaef's appearance without any connection with the Scyldings. One of the sources here is the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, which designates him as "Noah's son," "born in Noah's ark." \* Still further,

\* Evidently a half-Christian, half-rationalistic, interpretation of the legend of his coming on a ship. In this chronicle, by the way, Scaef occurs in connection with Scyld, being separated from him only by a short list of names added later; but the above interpretation of the legend tends to show that he was conceived as the progenitor of the human race in general.



perhaps, the gencalogy in Widsith in which Scafa is mentioned as the (first) ruler over the Langobards.\* The most important testimony for Scaef's existence outside of the line of the Scyldings is precisely the indirect evidence furnished by his being mentioned with them but in such wise that his name appears to be tagged on to the genealogical tree. The conclusion which lies nearest is that Scaef from the oldest times was assumed to be the progenitor of one or more of the tribes of the Baltic or the North Sea.

The next large problem is Scaef's (Scyld's) origin. It is clear that his name is homonymous with the Anglo-Saxon *scéaf* "a sheaf of grain." It is furthermore established that among the English on the banks of the Thames there existed a religious ceremony in which a sheaf of grain was made to float down the river and was considered the symbol of a divinity. This suggests that the sheaf was adored, once upon a time, as a divine personage; and scholars are agreed to accept this cult as the origin of the figure of Scaef, pointing to many customs among peoples of Europe and other continents in which the harvest sheaf is adored as a divinity and is then buried or thrown into the water.

The conclusion from this is that Scaef has a prescriptive right to the sheaf on the ship, and that this feature is very possibly older than his appearance among the Scyldings.

Asking now what right Scyld has to the legend of the ship, we must answer that similar conceptions are com-

\* We cannot enter here into the phonology and etymology of the form *Scafa* in Widsith.

mon to a number of ancestral figures among the peoples of the Baltic and the North Sea. In certain districts of Holland the Swan-Knight was considered the progenitor of the princely race. He was an historic person and really carried a swan in his escutcheon; but the conception that he arrived alone in a boat in profound sleep, that it was drawn by a swan, and that he left the land in the same miraculous manner, must be regarded as old legendary material. Finally there is an ancient Anglo-Saxon stanza (in the Rune Song) which says that Ing was first seen among the Danes and then disappeared again. Hence there seems to have existed a similar legend about this Ing, who is doubtless the progenitor of the Ingvæones (the tribes along the North Sea). In general, the legend of the progenitor arriving on a ship seems to be known among a number of people inhabiting the coasts of the North Sea, as well as among the Danes, and to have attached itself to various names according to the necessity of the case.

Another problem is as to the time when the name of Scyld was first connected with the legend. To judge from the sources at our disposal his place is among the poems celebrating the greatness of the Scyldings, which were composed during the Migration Period. It is possible, however, that the name is older still. In the old cult rite practiced among the people along the Thames the sheaf (*scéaf*) was placed on a shield (*scyld*) to float down with the stream. There existed, then, the possibility of designating the divinity symbolized either as "sheaf" or "shield" — the choice would likely be the first, for the sheaf represents the person sailing and the

shield only his ship. Still, the development of legends does not always follow the laws of logic when suggesting old ceremonies.

This short survey affords a glimpse, in the first place of the cult of the divinity of vegetation (the sheaf), and at the same time of legends of a progenitor known among a certain circle of neighboring tribes. But it is only as a link in the cycle of the Scyldings that the theme acquires poetic significance; and vice versa: only with Scyld's appearance in his ship, introducing the glorious period of the Scyldings — a conception which is, on the whole, maintained in *Beowulf* — does the significance of the legend for Danish heroic poetry begin. It is relatively unimportant whether or no we are acquainted with the life of the king who preceded him; or rather, this knowledge would be of greater interest in formulating the general law for the formation of legends than for the particular subject of this book. Only with the child Scyld on the royal ship of the Danes does this splendid poetic motif emerge into the bright light of day and in its full beauty, because it calls for a succession of "the great deeds of the Danes in the days of yore."

#### 4. NORTHERN SCYLDING LEGENDS CONCERNING THE DEATH JOURNEY BY SHIP

Before probing further into the antecedents of the Scylding legend, we must ask whether the journey on the ship is found only in English sources or also in Scandinavian traditions.

The answer is that corresponding legends do exist but are attributed to other persons who belong, however, to the Scylding circle.

In the Ynglingasaga there is the episode of the Danish viking leader Haki who had made himself the lord of Upsala but received a mortal wound in a victorious battle against the old royal race. "Now King Haki had gotten such sore hurts, that he saw that the days of his life would not be long; so he let take a swift ship that he had, and lade it with dead men and weapons, and let bring it out to sea, and ship the rudder and hoist up the sail, and then let lay fire in tar wood, and make a bale aboard. The wind blew off shore, and Haki was come nigh to death, or was verily dead, when he was laid on the bale, and the ship went blazing out into the main sea." \*

There is a similar account in the Skioldungasaga about King Sigurth hring. He felled both of his opponents in battle, but the maiden Alfsol whom he loved was then dead, for the brothers had given her poison before the battle. He himself had been wounded in the fighting. "He had a large ship piled with the corpses of fallen warriors and seated himself in the stern with Alfsol's body at his side; he then had the ship fired with pitch and sulphur, set sail before a land breeze, steered his course to the open sea, and killed himself; for, as he said to his men, he would rather, following the custom of his forefathers, enter Othin's hall with royal splendor than live on as an inactive old man. According to others he killed himself before setting sail. Nevertheless, following the customs of the times, he had a mound raised on the shore, called Hring's Mound." †

\* Morris and Magnússon's tr.

† Arngrim, p. 132.

In these narratives we recognise the thought which is fundamental in the Scyld legend: the winds blow the dead chieftain to a world beyond (the one source refers it in so many words as sailing to Othin). Add to this the agreement that the king before his death orders what is to be done with his body.

On the other hand there is this difference, that the Icelandic legends also contain a cremation, which the English accounts do not. This connection between the king's departure and his funeral pyre needs to be examined more closely.

In the *Skjoldungasaga* the whole scene is designated as the "custom of the forefathers"; but it is only the cremation on board the ship which can be proved to have been a tradition. The laws of Frothi give directions how kings and steersmen are to be burned on their ships. According to Saxo this custom came to an end with the burning of Harold Wartooth's body after the Bravalla battle. The nation of the Rus (i.e., the Swedes) living along the banks of the Volga beached the ships of their chieftains for burning their bodies on them. In Norway a sepulchral mound has been unearthed which had been thrown up around a burnt ship. Baldr's ship *Hringhorni* was rolled forth for the funeral pyre and Thor and the other gods stood near as it burned.\*

\* Saxo, 235, 119, 301; Vilh. Thomsen, *Ryske rikets grundläggning*, p. 40-41; *Snorra Edda*, i, 176; *Aarbøger for n. oldt.*, 1877, p. 184. The connection between the appointments of Scyld's ship at his departure, in *Beowulf*, and the custom such as it existed in reality has been examined by Knut Stjerna, *Skjolds hädanfärd* (in *Studier tillägnade H. Schück*, 1905, pp. 110-134; translated in his *Essays on Beowulf*, pp. 97 ff.); but he makes rather too light of the difference between the departure of Scyld for lands beyond the sea and the customary burial in a ship.

There is of course the possibility that the sending away of the body over the sea may have really been a custom. But considering the fact that it occurs only in heroic legends and, to be exact, only in the legends dealing with the Scyldings; also, that it is in every case done on the king's orders before his death, as an exceptional practice, probability seems to favor the view that it is a poetic tradition which attaches now to one, now to another hero.

There can hardly be any serious doubt as to who is the original possessor of this motif. Scyld is by all means the oldest personage to whom it attaches, being mentioned already in *Beowulf*; whereas Hring and Haki occur only in Icelandic writings from the beginning of the thirteenth century. Scyld is the ancient progenitor of the Danish royal race, acknowledged on all sides as such; Hring is the very last descendant of it whose life — apart from the Bravalla battle \* — becomes of importance only in late Norn tradition. Haki's conquest of the Swedish throne is likewise restricted to Norn tradition, being doubtless the latest offshoot of the Starkath legends.† And above all, Scyld is entitled to the legend for inner reasons: for this story expresses something peculiar to him and has its complement in the infant hero's arrival on the ship; whereas in the others it is merely an added feature which has no necessary connection with their lives.

There is nothing strange in the legend of Scyld or, rather, its last part — his death journey — being

\* To be treated in detail in *Danmarks Heltedigtning*, vol. iii.

† *Ibid.*, vol. ii, § 14.

ascribed also to other heroes. We have above noticed the tendency of its two essential themes to part company, Beowulf dwelling more particularly on the last journey as a subject for poetic treatment and changing, or touching but very lightly upon, the beginning; and Æthelweard preserving only the most essential part, the hero's arrival. But if, as in Beowulf, the hero's departure was treated by itself — whether in a lay or in prose narrative — the discovery that this feature really did not bear an essential relation to the origin of the royal race lay near; for the legend was then only an expression for the end of a heroic life or — seen on a large scale — of the heroic period. For this reason the legend quite logically took the motif from the progenitor and assigned it to the youngest of the race (Hring), or attached it to the story of the isolated Danish viking leader, whose Swedish dominion is lost again with his death (Haki). A contributory cause may be seen in the circumstance that it was just these personages who were to be given body in legendary stories and were to be provided with exploits, whereas there exists no connected Norn narrative about Skiöld. For this reason the legends originally belonging to him were almost forgotten, serving only as raw material for the composition of later legends.

We have thus found the legend of the journey of the dead hero on his ship in two localities, England and Iceland. With the material at our disposal, no traces of it can be shown in Denmark. Yet the legend as seen in its oldest (Anglo-Saxon) forms insists on having Denmark as its scene; and the legends of the Scyldings in Beowulf

prove to correspond largely to the oldest Danish lays. The fact that the Danish Skiöld legends of the twelfth century do not mention the death-journey motif is in itself no proof of its not having existed in Denmark sometime in antiquity. We have seen that these traditions have gotten rid precisely of the supernatural elements and have in their place absorbed rather the everyday activities of the warriors' life. Very possibly, we may have here the same relation as with the ancestral legend of the following section: there are traces of Frothi's gold mill down to the times of the Biarkamal, after which it disappears from the heroic legends of Denmark.

And where else should the Icelandic sagas have obtained the motif of the death-journey than from Denmark? It is, of course, not altogether impossible that it came from England; but there is nowhere any evidence of English forms having exerted any influence whatsoever on the corresponding Norn Scylding legends.\* The probability is by far greater that this motif travelled in the general direction of the Scylding legends, that is, from Denmark to Norn lands.

##### 5. THE JOURNEY TO THE REALM OF THE DEAD †

When the hero's body is laid on his ship, and committed to the waves to be conducted no one knows

\* The influence of Beowulf's fight with Grendel on the purely Icelandic legendary hero tales of Grettir and Orm Storolfsson is to be judged from a different point of view.

† The treatment of this chapter is essentially the same as in the Danish edition, since it is the author's purpose to return to the subject in another connection and with more material, though still along the same lines. For the present, reference is made to the above mentioned treatment of Stjerna which is, however, not the last word on the subject.



whither, this is a representation of the spirit of the dead journeying to the unknown land, to the kingdom of the dead. The myth of Scyld's departure to that world beyond will hardly be found to stand altogether by itself: a legend of this kind almost necessarily presupposes the existence of a popular belief in the journey of the dead over the seas.

It is remarkable how few instances of this belief exist in Northern tradition. Excluding Hring's and Haki's journeys which, as we have seen, are dependent on the Scyld-legend, there remains the hero legend of Sinfiotli's death as the only unmistakable instance: King Sigmund took the body of his dead son with him till he came to a sound where an old man in a boat received it to ferry it over; but both boat and the body disappeared forthwith. It was Othin who had fetched the dead warrior to his kingdom. We shall presently return to a discussion of the relations of this legend.

In all the remaining mythic poetry another conception is dominant: the ride to the abode of the dead. In all myths of Valhalla and of Hel this conception prevails; even the lay of Helgi Hundingsbani in which the entrance to the realm of the dead is imagined to be in the distant West — that is, then, beyond the seas, from a Scandinavian point of view — has its hero ride his spirit horse over æry paths. In the popular beliefs of the Viking Age *helvegr* "the way to Hel," as well as conceptions connected with it, such as *helskór* "shoes for the dead" play a great rôle. The ride of the spirits of the departed is seen again in the popular traditions of the North and of Germany, in the "Oskorrei," "wü-

tendes Heer," etc. Everywhere, in fact, among the peoples of the Teutonic race do we meet with the deeply rooted conception of a way to the realm of the dead which is to be travelled on foot or on horseback.

Archæologists have been in the habit of finding a more general testimony of the journey to the dead by ship in the burial customs of the Iron Age, viz., burial in a ship, cremation in a ship, or monuments of stones erected in the shape of a ship. These were compared with the burial customs of the South Sea Islanders who bury the body in a boat or, in some places, lay it into a boat to be carried out to sea by the Trade Winds. But this agreement is extremely doubtful. In the period preceding the Viking Age such a conception cannot have obtained or the journey to the dead would have found some expression in the written sources. It is, rather, precisely the Viking Age when this custom reached its highest development, and it is not possible to trace it to much earlier times. There is this additional observation that scarcely a trace of this custom is found in Denmark: in fact, burial in a ship is unknown there; the sparsely occurring monuments in the shape of a ship appear to owe their existence to contact with neighboring tribes. Also, this form of burial is, on the whole, too derivatory to be conclusive proof. As far as Denmark is concerned the theory that such a custom did prevail is based solely on the statute in Frothi's laws concerning the cremation of the fallen warriors in ships. But in this form the burial custom appears to owe its existence not so much to ideal demands as to the practical need to procure the fallen a quick, speedy,

and honorable funeral.\* With more justice, a religious meaning might be attributed to the burial by ship among the Swedes. Among them this custom appears earliest, in the royal burial mounds of Vendel (about 600), and is most zealously maintained; so there is no doubt of its having originated among them and from them spread to the remaining peoples of Scandinavia. Gotlandish figure-stones from about 1000 frequently show a ship, and over it a figure riding on Othin's eight-legged steed. However, proof of ships having been used as a conveyance to the realm of the departed is lacking. It is possible that both ship and arms were so highly cherished by the possessor that he might wish to have them in his grave in order to take them along to Valhalla by sacrifice, without the ship necessarily acquiring the nature of a conveyance thither. Perhaps the cremation on ships antedates burial in mounds, but we have no means of ascertaining the exact truth in this matter. Perhaps, also, it was thought in this manner to insure transportation into the world beyond. Here the matter becomes too obscure to be pursued further. We must, then, regard it as definitely established that there is no evidence of a fixed popular belief in a journey by sea to a world beyond ever having existed in the Scandinavian North; furthermore, that burial in a ship is not native to Denmark but a custom introduced in a later period. There are, however, countries not far removed in which the thought is more familiar.

\* Hildebrand, *Folkens tro om sina döda* (1874), p. 51-54, maintains a belief of a journey to the realm of the dead. For arguments against the existence of the burial custom in ships cf. S. Müller, *Vor Oldtid*, pp. 659 f. (= Jiriczek, *Nord. Allertumsk*, ii, 259). Cf. P. E. Müller, *Notae uberiorae*, pp. 112 f. and above p. 402.

Naturally, the conception of a journey by sea from the land of the living to the land of the dead must be native among peoples dwelling by the sea. It is met with in considerable development in Western Europe, among the Irish, the Scottish, the Bretons in Bretagne; also along the courses of the great navigable rivers of Western Europe, such as the Rhine and the Rhone. In the French Romance of Lancelot there is a remarkable parallel to the Scyld legend: the Lady of Escalot prays that her body be laid on a ship with rich appointments, and that it be allowed to drift whithersoever the winds would carry it, without any rudder. \* The noble family of Catillon on the coast of Ireland has the coffin carried down to the shore during ebb tide so that the rising tide may carry it away.† Gervasius of Tilbury relates (about 1200) that it was the custom among the French nobility and clergy in the Rhone valley to lay the bodies of the departed into water-tight coffins, which would then drift like boats down with the current. These coffins would always be driven ashore in the delta of the river and be buried by the priests of Arles who would keep the money in them for the saying of masses. One evening a blind man was praying on one of the islands when he heard a vessel being rowed down the Rhone; upon his question who it was he received the answer: "It is Ebroin; we are ferrying him to the place of torture in Ætna"; Ebroin was the man who had put his eyes out. Along the Rhine the legend is told that when the Holy Maternus had died in Cologne the

\* P. Paris, *Romans de la Table Ronde*, v, 342; *Cento novelle antiche*, 81.

† Croker, *Fairy Legends and Traditions of the South of Ireland*, New Series (1828), pp. 21 ff.

#### 410 THE HEROIC LEGENDS OF DENMARK

people of that city wished to keep his body, but that the inhabitants of Treves demanded it back as he had been their bishop. They agreed to lay the body on a ship and let it drift whither God would direct it. Then it drifted a league against the stream, and the people of Treves had the body returned to them. The Jews of Mayence tell the same legend about Rabbi Amram, and that his body floated from Cologne up the river to Mayence. According to a German legend of more recent origin, the body of Saint Emmeranus drifted up the Danube. Along the rivers, then, the custom has come to mean that the departed should seek their own burial places, and in this form it is sanctioned by the Christian clergy both as a legend in the Rhine country and as a burial custom in the Rhone valley. Between the two, we have the legend of the blind man and Ebroin's body, indicating complete agreement that the way to the realm of the departed leads through the mouth of the river. And in its poetic form (the lady of Escalot) the conception closely resembles the Scyld legend.

It is especially in Irish mythology that we find the thought of a realm of the departed, or rather, of immortality; far to the west there lies the "land of life," "the land of joy," a hundred times as large as Ireland, and that is the realm of the departed. The same thought lives in our days among the inhabitants of the Hebrides, who call the kingdom of the dead "the other shore" (*tu thall*, see *Folklore*, vi, p. 170). One of the Old Irish lays relates how one of the daughters of the king of the dead fetches prince Condlia in her boat. Arthur, the king of the Britons, when mortally wounded,

orders his body to be carried down to the seashore where a queen and her maidens take him aboard their vessel and row away with him to the castle of Avalon, the dwelling of the immortals. On the coast of France there exists the belief that the inhabitants of certain places along the shore serve as ferrymen who transport the souls of the departed to England. Procopius (sixth century) tells this about a people "under the dominion of the Franks"; and a similar belief still exists in the Bretagne. On the continent there exists also the conception of a supernatural ship which fetches the departed. Thus in Normandy and, in a more Christianized or, rather, diabolized, form also in the Netherlands and on the coast of Germany.\*

The legends of Scyld and of Sinfjötli, localized though they are in the North, do not correspond to any Northern belief, but rather to the legendary lore of the western Celtic lands. As to the Sinfjötli episode, the fact is that the death-journey in it corresponds in its details rather closely to the legend of Arthur's death, just as it has, in general, been noticed that the legends of Sigmund and Sinfjötli seem to a remarkable degree dependent on the Arthurian cycle.† The Scyld legend, on the other hand, answers to the custom of setting the dead adrift in coffins or on ships so that they themselves may find

\* For the journey to the realm of the departed cf. Grimm, *Myth.*, iii<sup>4</sup>, 248; Gervasius of Tilbury, *Otia imperialia*, herausgeg., v. Liebrecht, pp. 42, 100, 149-150; Bassett, *Sea Phantoms*, pp. 350, 354. I shall not consider the late Swedish legend about the gold ship in Runemad which brought to Valhalla the warriors who had taken part in the Bravalla battle (certainly of literary origin); nor Flosi's departure in the last chapter of the Njalssaga as it is evidently the sense of the saga that he was drowned.

† Schofield, *Signy's lament*, Publ. Mod. Lang. Assoc., xiii, p. 284-291.

their way to the world beyond — a motif we found again, if not in the British Isles, on the mainland of Western Europe. At the same time the hero has come as an infant from the world beyond, and from beyond the seas; this is not only the abode of the souls but also the world of the gods. This trait also corresponds to Celtic conceptions.

It would seem difficult to learn more about the Scyld motif from the sources at our disposal. It is, then, an ancient hero myth with elements of the supernatural, but one whose religious conceptions correspond neither to anything in Northern mythology nor to conceptions common to the Teutonic peoples in general. Its connections are to be sought, rather, in beliefs current in a large territory which may be designated, geographically, as West European or as the countries bordering on the Atlantic, and, racially, as corresponding to the regions where Celtic language and mythology are dominant. The connection of the Sinfiotli legend with Celtic beliefs is capable of demonstration with the help of its epic details. In the case of the story of Scyld the proof rests entirely on the similarity of customs. It is likely that it owes its origin to Celtic beliefs obtaining about the beginning of our era, when the influence of Celtic civilization on the North was at its height; even though it is not altogether impossible that the old custom obtaining on the shores of the Atlantic may in some other way have left traces in Danish legendary lore.

## 6. THE LEGENDS OF THE SWAN-KNIGHT AND OF INGUI

The connections between the Scyld legend and Celtic mythical conceptions seem to be hidden in times and under circumstances which defy further investigation; but there are isolated traces of the Scyld motif outside the Scandinavian-English myths about him.

I shall of course be careful not to include among them the many legends about a child of royal race who is exposed in a chest and drifts over the sea to a stranger shore; for that is only the usual motif of the foundling. A somewhat different tradition is to be seen in the Dutch legends of the Swan-Knight.

The Swan-Knight was in the Middle Ages the mythical progenitor of a number of Dutch princely houses. Earliest in time is the connection of the legend with the forefathers of Godfrey of Bouillon; recent investigations have demonstrated that from this family it migrated to other princely houses.\* The legend of the twelfth century runs about as follows: Once upon a time a boat was seen from the castle at Nimwegen on the Rhine. It went up stream, drawn by a swan with a silver chain about its neck. In the boat there was an armed knight. When the boat had arrived at the castle he descended and announced himself the champion of the duchess of

\* Blöte, *Der historische schwanritter*, *Zs. f. rom. phil.*, xxi, pp. 176-191; cf. *id.*, *Zs. f. d. Alt.*, xlii, 1-53, xliv, 407-420, lvii, 185. The same author's earlier mythological treatment of the swan motif (*ibid.*, xxxviii, 272-288) is superseded by his later articles. Cf. also Gölther, *Lohengrin*, *Roman. forsch.*, v, 103 ff. and Reiffenberg's introduction to *Le Chevalier au Cygne et Geoffroi de Bouillon*, *Monuments pour servir à l'histoire de Namur*, iv (1847); *Romania*, xxiii, 445; *Hist. litt. de Fr.* xxii, 388 ff. I have not seen Blöte: *Das aufkommen der sage von Brabon Silvius, dem brabantischen schwanritter* (Amsterdam, 1904).



Bouillon against the aggression of a neighboring prince. As a reward he received her daughter in marriage. He forbade her to ask him about his origin or to remind him of how he had come; but one time she broke her vow and straightway the swan appeared, drawing the boat behind him; the knight hurried from the castle and leapt into it, vanished and was seen no more.

Not a few of the episodes in this story are historical. The Norman barons of Toni bore the inherited title of "Swan-Knights". To this family belonged one Roger who in the year 1018 arrived in Spain with a troop of Norman adventurers and helped the widowed countess of Barcelona against the Moors and was married to her daughter. He was probably the same knight who in 1019 was chosen as her champion in a lawsuit with a neighboring count, which was, however, settled in another way. With this historical figure originates the motif of the arrival in a strange land, the single combat, and the marriage with the daughter of the duchess; and when Balduin of Boulogne married Roger's granddaughter this historic swan-knight legend was introduced into the Netherlands. During the first crusade it was transformed into a legend about the progenitor of Balduin and his famous brother, Godfrey of Bouillon. At the same time the scene was changed, the heroic deed being no longer performed in foreign lands but in the home country, the knight arriving in a supernatural manner from unknown lands and returning thither in the same mysterious way. Finally his departure is motivated by the broken promise of asking no questions about his origin, whereupon the supernatural being van-

ishes—a fairy tale theme which enjoyed great popularity in the Middle Ages. Later, the legend was still further elaborated by letting the swan which draws the ship be one of the wild swans of the well-known fairy tale, whose deliverance is woven into the narrative.

The legend thus being transformed from an historic narrative of the Norman adventurer in foreign parts into one of a supernatural hero who arrives in the land from an unknown world and returns thither in the same mysterious manner, has come to resemble the Scyld legend. One might be tempted to think of an influence of the English legend of Scaef which lies so near, both in time and place; but we must remember that this version lacks the return motif and moreover has entirely given up the warlike aspect of the hero by connection with the sheaf of grain. It is the oldest form of the Scyld legend which suggests connection with the Swan-Knight or, perhaps, a form of it which precedes even our oldest sources. The hero's mythical character, which has been toned down in the figure of Scyld, would here appear in a clearer light.

It is scarcely reasonable to suppose that it was a mere accident which transformed the historic Swan-Knight into a figure resembling that of Scyld; for the hero originating among the gods is, as shown, not a figure which is current in Northern heroic poetry. It is by far more likely that some ancestral legend of the Scyld type was of influence on the memories of Roger's exploits in Spain. Earlier investigators fixed their attention especially on the swan, regarding this animal as the revelation of a mythical world. The most recent investigations have

demonstrated, however, that the swan is connected with the historic elements of the legend and the barons of Toni. But precisely when the swan is eliminated the other mythical elements become more prominent: the ship which comes from a supernatural world without a steersman, the sleeping knight on board, and his departure in the same mysterious manner. It is in just this form that it stands closest to the Scyld legend.

We are justified, then, in assuming that somewhere in the Netherlands there existed a legend of some progenitor which was a variant of the Scyld motif: the ship approaches land by itself, the sleeping knight awakes and leaps ashore, he becomes the progenitor of the ruling race, and then departs in the same mysterious manner in which he arrived. Unfortunately we do not know this legend in forms of sufficient antiquity to offer any material help in determining the ways by which foreign mythic elements penetrated into Scandinavian folklore.

However, there is still another ancestral legend which occurs in connection with the Danes. In *Beowulf* the Danish people are designated by the name of *Ingwine*. A corresponding progenitor *Ing* is mentioned in the Anglo-Saxon Rune Song: "Ing was first (or: in the earliest time) seen of men among the East-Danes, until he fared forth eastward (?) over the sea, . . . thus called men the hero." \*

\*

*Ing was árest  
mid East-Denum  
gestæwen secgun  
óp hé siððan ést*

*ofer wæg gewót;  
wæn æfter ran,  
ðus heardingas  
ðone hæle nemdun.*

(Grimm, *Myt.*<sup>2</sup>; Grein-Wülcker, *Bibl. der ags. poesie*, i, p. 335; Müllenhoff, *Zs. f. d. alt.*, xxiii, 11).

From this we learn, (1) that Ing lived for some time among the Danes (East-Danes being, of course, only one of the many sounding expressions of Anglo-Saxon epic poetry for Danes), (2) that he arrived from a different world; for here among the Danes he was "seen of men," (3) that he finally departed over the sea. His career corresponds, then, with that of Scyld or the Swan-Knight. It is reasonable to assume that his advent from a strange world also took place from over the sea; for the Danes are always thought of as a specially maritime nation.

We are told in the song that he fared "eastward" (*ést*), that is, from the land of the Danes to countries which — from the Anglo-Saxon point of view — were distant and unknown. This would correspond well with what we are told about Scyld's departure: "no hero 'neath heaven" can say "who harbored that freight." Still, the little word *ést* may also be a scribe's mistake for *eft* "thereafter," and in that case the text says no more than that he left the Danes by faring forth over the sea.

"The wain ran after" (*wæn æfter ran*), we read in the next sentence of the poem, and it is evident that this phrase is to contain a circumstance about his departure. But as yet no one of the interpreters has been able to explain what rôle the wain plays in the sea. I suspect that *wæn* conceals some mistake or misunderstanding of the scribe. To judge from the related legends we should expect the thought that his vessel brought him back to the place from whence he came, or some similar statement.\*

\* Tentatively I suggest to read *wæg-hengeſt æfter ran*, "the wave-horse (i.e., the ship) ran back again" (understanding *æfter* in the same sense as Old Norse *aptr* "back.")

However, it is safest to disregard this doubtful phrase and dwell on the evident meaning of the passage that the progenitor arrived in a supernatural manner and departed again over the sea. This account would, then, either be identical with the motif of Scyld and the Swan-Knight or else be very similar to it. The extreme compression of the passage does not permit us to ascertain which of the two it resembles most closely. It would be simplest to think of Ing departing from the Danes during his lifetime, as does the Swan-Knight.

In the above discussion I have assumed — as seems to me most reasonable — that Ing came to the Danes on board a ship, in the same manner as he departed. Still, it is possible to interpret the passage in a different manner: the progenitor may have revealed himself among men in a still more godlike fashion. Compare the belief widely diffused among Indians and Australians of a god who lived among men and finally departed again, generally over the sea. But this resemblance is certainly far-fetched; moreover the whole conception appears very strange among Teutonic traditions. It seems decidedly easier to explain the brief allusion of the Ing legend by reference to the myths of Scyld and the Swan-Knight.

An entirely different conception has been maintained by Múllenhoff (*Zs. f. d. Alt.*, xxiii, 11) who assumes that Ing was the progenitor of the Anglo-Saxons, and explains the passage in the Rune Song to mean that Ing departed from the land of the Danes over the sea to come to the Anglo-Saxons. He emends *æt* ("eastward") to read *aft* ("thereafter"). This interpretation would present the anomaly that the point which for an Anglo-Saxon poet must have been the most important, viz., Ing's coming to the Anglo-Saxons, is not mentioned at all. However, the very assumption on which he bases this interpretation is not justified by the sources. The Anglo-Saxons used the names *Ing* and *Ingwine* solely in connection with the Danes. In their numerous national genealogies there is no mention of Ing as the founder of a royal race.\* For that matter, names in *Ing*-play

\* Among the ancestors of the kings of Bernicia there occurs one *Ingwi* in the middle of the line; but this may be the name of a historic personage (cf.

an exceedingly modest rôle in Northern England, the land of the Angles. On the whole, both Saxons and Angles lack ancient national legends about sea journeys. Hence it is but reasonable that they associate the departure of both Scyld and Ing with another people.

The attribution of a ship-journey must probably have been older in the case of Ing than of Scyld; at any rate the myth about him was forgotten at a much earlier time. As a progenitor of the Danish kings he is unknown to Scandinavian sources. There is a reminiscence of him in Anglo-Saxon poetry because there was needed a versicle about the rune *ing*. In Anglo-Saxon poetry, the name *Ingwine* (= Danes) occurs only a few times. From the Danish point of view Ing is a progenitor whose figure pales and vanishes at the very time when Scyld and the Scyldings stand in the zenith of their fame.

Going to still older sources, the Roman authors, we find that *Ingvæones* (= *Ingwine*) is the common name for a larger group of tribes which dwelt by the ocean. They deemed themselves the descendants of *Inguo*.\* Among these tribes were counted the Chauci (in Hanover) and the Cimbri (in Jutland).† According to later

Yngvi as an actual name in Scandinavia), and several of the accompanying names (a father with the name of *Angensvit* or *-geat* and a son *Æðilbrið*, in some MSS.) do not appear to be fictitious names at all. (Cf. Müllenhoff, *Beowulf*, p. 65).

\* *Inguo* in the Frankish Table of Nations; *Ing* in the Anglo-Saxon Rune Song; *Yngvi* (*Yngvi-Freyr*) in Old Norn (as a progenitor of the Swedish royal dynasty). *Yngvi* is an Old Norn spelling to which would correspond an Old Danish form *Ingvi*, which form I adopt on the following pages. A more special investigation into the linguistic relation between Ing and *Ingvi* falls outside the scope of this work.

† The *Ingvæones* are generally considered to be identical with the Anglo-Frisian group; but this matter is in strong need of renewed examination. How

Anglo-Saxon tradition also the Danes were said to be Ingwine.

This group of tribes on the Southern and Eastern littoral of the Atlantic furnishes us the very oldest indication of the existence of a legend about the journey to the realm of the dead. With this in mind, we can understand the geographic spread of the legend both to the Rhine and to the Danes; also, how it came to be attributed to Scyld when the figure of Ingvi fell into oblivion, and that in still other countries this legend could amalgamate with reminiscences of the historic Swan-Knight. It is not difficult to understand that for these coastwise populations a hero from the unknown world beyond the sea would become the great legendary motif. In these regions there also exists the possibility of coming in touch with Western and Celtic conceptions of the same kind (cf. the preceding chapter), whether now we conceive of them as the primitive belief of the peoples along the Atlantic or as legends of the more highly developed Celtic civilization which, in the centuries directly preceding our era, exerted a decided influence on Northern Europe.

This connection between the Ingvæones and the folklore of the Atlantic littoral is, then, the probable origin of the legend of the ship-journey. A more definite conclusion is not possible from the scattered and frag-

is it to be explained that the (non Anglo-Frisian) Danes are designated as Ingwine, whereas the Anglo-Saxons do not count themselves such? Moreover, their progenitor gradually becomes the ancestor of the Swedish and Norwegian royal families. The most reasonable assumption seems that his name which, at one time, may have indicated common descent was gradually transferred to tribes that came into touch with its former bearers.

mentary material at our disposal; for only with Scyld as a babe on the royal ship of the Danes does this splendid motif emerge into clear light.

#### 7. DANISH HERO LEGENDS OF SCYLD

Another, undoubtedly younger, cycle of legends about Scyld is to be found in Saxo's *Chronicle*. There is, first, the narrative of how he, when still a boy, encounters the bear and, without weapons, binds him hand and foot until his companions come and kill the monster.\* He was a full-grown warrior when only fifteen and asked for the hand of the fair maiden Alfild, but was challenged to single combat by his rival, the German earl "Scatus." He fought with him in sight of the Danish and German armies, and "by slaying him he made tributary the Germans who were subdued by the death of their chieftain." In another place Saxo relates that he overcame in single combat several warriors "among whom Attalus and Scatus were famous." Finally Saxo tells, in his passage about Scyld's laws, that he made the warlike rule to give to his followers not only their pay but also the booty taken from the enemy, "saying that the retainers were to have the guerdon but the chieftain the glory." †

\* Saxo exaggerates his youthfulness, as, e.g., when he says: he "had received permission from his foster father to accompany the hunters as a spectator." This reminds one too strongly of the royal hunting expeditions of the period of Waldemar which served as an amusement, whereas in antiquity the chase was the natural occupation of the young king's son: "Rode Kon the young through copse and forest, with bow and arrow he shot the birds" (*Rígsþula*, stanza 46); in Saxo's sixth book the young Ingiald returns from the chase. We may assume that Scyld also was armed only with bow and arrow and therefore had to wrestle with the bear.

† Concerning this rule cf. what is said at the end of the present section.



In these accounts we have the picture of the young hero; the whole strength of the race is embodied in his young manhood and self-confidence. Only, his heroic deeds somehow do not hold our interest by their own virtue. They remind us too strongly of the other Scylding legends. This is most patent in his rule governing the distribution of booty, which is the same that in the Biarkamal is attributed to Hrolf: naught was so fair but he lavished it, nothing so dear to him but he bestowed it on his warriors. In Hrolf's story his generosity comes in properly as a contrast to Hroerik's avarice; but in the life of Scyld it has no connection, since no mention is made elsewhere concerning his relations to the housecarls.

Still other hero legends are echoed in Scyld's combats. The single combat in the sight of the Danish and German armies, and the tribute exacted from the Saxons as a consequence of the Danish champion's victory is told more fully and better in the story of Uffi's single combat on the islet in the Eider River. The fight for the king's daughter, which does not occur in the story of Uffi, reminds one of the single combat between Biarki and Agnar, after which Hrut was given to the victorious Dane. As to Scyld's first exploit, his fight with the bear, it reminds one of the corresponding deed of Biarki, even though each performs it in a manner suiting his respective nature and position.

We have, then, echoes from the legend of Biarki and Uffi. The scenes of their activity are about the same as those we know from the warrior legends of the Hrolf cycle: single combats, the chase, and the life of the

housecarls. Hence it is reasonable not to seek the prototypes of these stories in mythical traditions that may have been lost, but rather to interpret them as reflections of the warrior legends that already existed. We are not, of course, to assume a mere thoughtless imitation but, in all likelihood, a popular conception of the progenitor as the young hero in his precocious strength — a union in the child, as it were, of the warrior's attributes and the royal paragon, which in the later history of the race separate into two distinct persons.

It is noteworthy that Scyld's exploits are never mentioned in the earlier times, when the composition of lays celebrating the heroic life flourished most; but only when the prose traditions — among them Saxo's Danish traditions — were gaining ground. It stands to reason that when the Scylding legends suffered a transition from the poetic form to everyday speech, the vague generalities couched in poetic diction would no longer suit. Instead, it became necessary to have definite details and clearly defined actions. The luxuriant growth of legends which surrounded the lyric figure of the singer Hialti with epic motifs was bound to create new expressions also for Scyld as the prototype of the heroic race.

Of course, there is also the possibility that it was extraneous material which gave rise to the names and figures mentioned in Saxo's account. We may not indicate with certainty exactly which circumstances may have come into play here; but I shall suggest at least one possibility. Scyld's most notable deed is his victory over the German "satrapa," as Saxo calls the chieftain

“Scatus,” which in all probability renders Old Icelandic *Skati*.<sup>\*</sup> The name alliterates with Scyld’s own, which may indicate that they were mentioned together in epic poetry. But *skati* signifies also simply “warrior,” and a sentence like *Skiöldr vá skata* (or similarly) would merely mean “Skiöld slew warriors.” In *Beowulf* a very similar thought is expressed in the words:

Oft Scyld Scéfing  
sceaðena þrátum,  
monegum mægðum,  
meodo-setla oftéah.

(“Often Scyld, the son of Scef, took the lives of squadrons of warriors, of many hosts.”) This Anglo-Saxon *sceaða*, “warrior” corresponds, at any rate in use, to Old Norse *skati*.<sup>†</sup> An alliterative phrase to the effect that Scyld slew *skaða* or *skata* seems to have been frequent in Anglo-Saxon poetry, just as one associated the word “high” with Halfdan, and *skop* (fate) with Scyldings.<sup>‡</sup> The transition from *skati* “warrior” to a person *Skati* will then be of the same kind as is seen in another instance: an Icelandic list of names contains the line *Björn reið Blakki* (*Snorra Edda*, i, 484), which seems purely a mistake for an older *biörn* (á) *blakki*, corre-

\* A form *Skat* would appear to be more likely since Saxo otherwise makes words of the strong class to end in Latin -us; but such a name is unknown. The fact is that Saxo is less exact with his forms in the beginning of his chronicle, provided only they have a good Latin ring (*Attalus*, *Bessus*). On the other hand there is an Old Norse name *Skati* (Lind, *Norsk-isl. dopnamn*, p. 910; Rygh, *Personnarne i norske stedsnavne*, p. 220), which possibly existed also in Old Danish (O. Nielsen, *Oldd. personnarne*, p. 84) = Old High German *Scazo*.

† Cf. the doublets *Haddingjaskati* and *-skaði*.

‡ *héah Healfdene* (*Beowulf*, 57), *Hálfðan fyrri hástr Skjöldunga* (*Hyndluljóð*, 14), *skop ærtu Skjöldunga* (*Atlamál*, stanza 2), *vinnat skjöldungar skoppum* (*Helgakviða Hund.*, ii, stanza 29); perhaps also *Helgi* with *hildingar*, *ibid.*, ii).

sponding to Anglo-Saxon *beornas on blancum*, "warriors on horses." \*

In the same manner the story of Scyld's bear hunt may merely be due to a misunderstanding of an ancient poetic term *björn* 'bear,' i.e., 'warrior.' This is Anglo-Saxon usage which, as just mentioned, doubtless prevailed also in Old Norse. But, as has been said, these would only be the external and adventitious circumstances: the essential thing in the origin of these legends being the people's desire to translate the idea of the youthful hero Scyld into definite actions.

The young, often even childlike, hero's struggle with a savage beast is a recurring feature of epic poetry. Finnbogi, when a boy of twelve, wrings the neck of a wild bull. Sigurth is attacked by a dragon but kills it with a firebrand. Sinfiotli crushes the adder in his arms. The seven year old Cuchullin one evening encounters a mad dog; he throws away ball and bat and seizes the animal's neck in front and back and crushes it against a stone post. When still in his cradle, Heracles strangles the serpents. David slew a lion and a bear before he felled Goliath. Samson's first exploit was to tear asunder the jaws of a lion that attacked him, Rustem's, to lay low an elephant he encountered, Mher's, to flay a lion. This is the ever recurring first motif in the career of the great heroes of a nation. In the case of Scyld, however, it is not so much an introduction

\* *Béowulf*, 857. A warrior "Scatus" occurs at still another place in Saxo's legends (p. 80). He is slain by his brother King Halfdan. However, he seems to be a newly invented personage since all other traditions mention Frothi instead as Halfdan's foe. Is also this person Skati a misunderstanding for the generic term *skati*?

to his own unusual career as to the greatness of the entire family.

The episode of the fight with the savage beast is not unknown in Scandinavian lore. Thus the first great deed of Finnbogi is to track a bear to his lair and to wrestle with it and break its back. A more famous example of this fight is that of Heracles, who strangles the Nemæan lion. For that matter, the wrestling of the hero with a wild beast is an ancient motif in Denmark too. We see it pictured already among the mythical scenes which are graven on the silver caldron found in Gundestrup, Jutland (3d cent. A.D.), for which representation the fight of Heracles with the Nemæan lion plainly furnishes the plastic model. To be sure, the hero's name was different, presumably that of some native leader. It is not altogether impossible that it may already then have pictured Scyld's fight. Still, the literary sources do not encourage us in ascribing so great an age to this legend; for we have seen how this motif will spontaneously arise as an expression for a young hero's unpremeditated proof of huge strength. Also his being unarmed is a steadily recurring feature in legends of this nature.\*

\* On the Gundestrup caldron, see *Nordiske fortidsminder*, i, 2d fasc., p. 56; *Þiðreksaga*, c. 166 (Sigurth); *Völsungasaga* c. 7 (Sinfjötli); cf. Wigström, *Folksdiktning i Skåne*, ii, 84; *Finnbogasaga*, c. 3 (and 6); *The Cattle Raid of Cuulnge*, Grimm *Lebr.* xvi, 24 (Cuchullin); Samson, *Book of Judges*, c. 14, 5-6; *First Book of Kings*, c. 17, 35; Rustem, Firdusi, *Königsbuch von Iran*, Übers. von Rückert, i; *Z. d. d. vörsins f. volkskunde*, xii, 149-563 (the Armenian hero Mher). Different again from this unpremeditated fight of the youthful hero is the motif that he tracks the monster to its lair and slays it there (e.g., Finn's fight with a bear in the Osmianic cycle, *Folklore Record*, iv, 17); this is most likely a variation of the motif.

One item in Saxo's story of Scyld in the passage added later is not to be explained by the popular desire to individualize his life. "He was the first," says Saxo, "who gave the law concerning the revocation of a slave's emancipation, after he had been betrayed by a thrall whom he had given his liberty." \* This does show a certain connection with the other Scylding legends, when we remember that Hrolf was betrayed by his sworn liegeman Hiarvarth. Seeing that this motif is reflected in the Norwegian saga of Frothi, which is a very late production, as an interesting secondary motif, a similar relation may be claimed also for the Scyld legend. It is curious, however, that the main stress is put, not on Scyld, but on the thralls. As to the statute in question it no doubt held at one time in Danish law. A very similar law existed in Norway (*Gulathinglaw*, c. 66; *Norges gamle love*, i, 34): "A released slave shall show regard for his rightful master; he shall not plot against his life and property . . . he shall not face him with spear or with sword, and shall not join the hosts of his enemies; . . . but if he do any one of these things then shall he return to the same seat which he occupied before (i.e., become a slave again)." Just as certain other laws of real life are attributed to King Frothi (in Saxo's 5th book), this one was ascribed to Scyld. And this was scarcely done while the law had full validity, but rather at a time when it came to be disregarded. Some time during the Middle Ages, when the emancipation of slaves became ever more frequent — thanks to the efforts of the Church — some one may have felt the necessity to insist on the letter of the old law and to support it by referring its origin to Denmark's first ruler.

Scyld's deeds of peace show neither great age nor any fulness of contents. To start with, Saxo himself represents him as warlike; only during his later working over of his chronicle does he add the account of Scyld's peaceful activities, in order to set him forth as the perfect ideal "not only in warlike pursuits but also in love for his fatherland" — that is, in order to make him correspond to the ideas of his own times, characterized by the many-sided activities of an Absalon, as to what a leader of his people ought to be. A sentence like the one about Scyld's paying every one's debts is an author's comment, not any legendary material. And the phrase that "he eased the sick" needs no longer to be explained (with P. E.

\* Cited according to the Angers MS.; the Paris edition contains a more prolix and rather vague statement.

Müller) by reference to the conception obtaining in antiquity of the king's having *læknishendr* (healing hands), because with the more original Angers MS. before us we know that the author at first was in doubt whether he should write "eased the sick" or "eased the needy" (*egros vel egentēs*). We have to think of a later time, then, which formed Scyld as an ideal also of a peaceful reign, and with legendary material so young and slender that no figure of him could take body without being helped out by Saxo's own descriptions.

Doubts which may not be called unjustified have been raised also against the one warlike expression in the passage added, viz. concerning Scyld's generosity (see above, p. 421). The words used with reference to Scyld (*affirmare solitus, pecuniam ad milites, gloriam ad ducem redundare debere*) correspond closely to the ones Saxo uses elsewhere about Absalon (*gloriam ad se, spolia ad milites redundare speciosum ducenda*, book 16, 976); for which reason P. E. Müller concluded that Saxo simply transferred his phrase about Absalon to Scyld. Against this opinion must be held the fact that Saxo's 16th book belongs to the portions written last (Jörgen Olrik, *Historisk tidsskrift*, 8th series, vol. ii, 260). One ought also to be careful about making inferences from Saxo's possible stylistic model as to what his sources contained; for we have no instance of Saxo having simply fabricated any detail. At any rate, the sentiment expressed here is one not unfamiliar to the ancient mode of thought (even if it scarcely could find expression in the laws of antiquity): it is precisely this sentiment which the Biarkamal utters about Hrolf. So that even if this sentence had been invented by Saxo or his informant, bishop Absalon, to be put into Scyld's mouth, it expresses the ancient mode of thinking. And just as natural as it was for Absalon to live up to it, in the conviction of acting in the spirit of his forefathers, just so natural is it that its origin be referred to the progenitor Scyld, the fountain-head of the later strength of the entire race.

Earlier investigators claimed to detect at least one mythical element in Saxo's account. They held Scyld's father *Lotherus* to be identical with the god *Lóðurr* who in the *Völuspá* appears at the creation of man together with Othin and Hœnir and is, in all probability, a reduplication of Othin himself. In this manner the Danish sources were made to express the same view as the Icelandic monuments, viz., that Scyld was Othin's son. But Lotherus, the jealous prince who drives his brother from the throne has no attribute which

would indicate any connection with Teutonic gods. Hence he is now generally considered to be identical with the Hlōth mentioned in the *Hervararsaga*, the evil-minded and envious brother who aims to deprive Angantyr of the suecession. Scyld's grandfather Humblus belongs to the same cycle of legends, being the same as Hlōth's grandfather Humli. At any rate, in legend Lotherus belongs with his brother. His connection with Scyld is confined to the latter being his "son," i.e., successor, in the genealogy composed by Saxo.\*

#### 8. SCYLD AS A SON OF OTHIN

All Icelandic sources are agreed that Scyld was Othin's son. Almost as frequently they voice the conception that he ascended the throne in connection with Othin's immigration to the North.

The first of these two conceptions is designated by scholars as a purely mythic tradition. They are not so sure what to make of the second.

Their doubts concerning Othin's immigration are well-grounded; for it occurs not even in the very oldest medieval sources. Both Ari the Learned and Saxo know only of Frey's settling in Upsala. Othin is brought in later. As the leader of the immigration of the Æsir he is mentioned for the first time about 1200, and this so-called myth is accompanied from the very beginning by learned conjectures concerning the home of the gods, and leans heavily—through the *Langfeðgatal*—on Anglo-Saxon genealogies, in which all royal races are derived from Othin. The apportionment of the land between Othin's sons is to the author of *Langfeðgatal*

\* *Danmarks Heltedigtning*, ii, 228. Still further proof of the form *Hlōðr* being the original form of that name is to be seen in the fact that the genealogies most closely connected with that of Saxo (*a, b, c*) write *Lōðer*, which exactly corresponds to *Hlōðr* but is different from *Lōðurr*.



the explanation of this fact which he saw in his foreign source.\*

It will then be seen that Scyld's claim to being Othin's son stands on a shaky foundation: it is not made previous to the theory of the immigration of the gods, and in fuller accounts of it is but a part of this theory.†

It may be objected that we ought not to reject a piece of information which is stated so definitely, and that a writer of a genealogy would not simply invent it on his own responsibility.

Now it is very fortunate that we can test the correctness of this criticism. In the *Langfeðgatal* and the other sources to which we have reference here, Ingvifrey is stated to be a descendant of Othin. That is in strongest contradiction to all sources from ancient times, which uniformly maintain that Frey does not even belong to the Æsir but, on the contrary, to another race of gods, the Vanir. It was, therefore, not until the Middle Ages that Frey was made the descendant of Othin because the theory of the learned demanded that all the royal races of the North were descended from Othin. But if

\* I hope to show this more in detail in a separate article on "the Immigration of the Æsir." For the first, reference is made to A. Heusler, *Die gelehrte Urgeschichte im altisländischen Schrifttum*, *Abh. der Preuss. Akad.*, 1908). Some scholars have thought to find confirmation in a stanza of the Norwegian poet Bragi Boddason of the conception that the Danish royal race was descended from Othin (*óniðjaðan þriðja*); but a different reading is accepted by F. Jónsson, *Skjaldedigtning*, i, 5.

† The immigration is mentioned in (1) the older redaction of the *Langfeðgatal* (A. M. 22 fol.; cf. *Kilderne til Saksens Oldhistorie*, i, 94); (2) the younger redaction of the same (SRD, i, 2; cf. *Flateyjarbók*, i, 26); (3) the younger *Skioldungasaga* (*Upphaf allra frásagna*, Fms. XI, 412 = Arngrím, c. i); (4) Snorri's *Ynglingasaga*, c. v; (5) the introduction to Snorri's *Edda* (i, 26). It is not mentioned in (6) the introduction to the Quern Song (Sn. *Edda* i, 375) nor in (7) the alliterative enumeration of Othin's sons (Sn. *Edda*, i, 554); about which point see below.

this change was carried through in the case of Frey it was all the easier to do so with Skjold.

Scraps of the immigration theory and of learned genealogies invariably appear whenever Scyld is mentioned as Othin's son. Even in the alliterative list of "Othin's sons" (Sn. *Edda*, i, p. 554), where we might expect to find purely mythological material, he is accompanied by an Yngvifrey, which testifies to the influence of the learned genealogies. The only source in which Scyld is mentioned as Othin's son without any further addition is the introduction to the Quern Song and there the conciseness of the information is due to considerations of space. Or, let us assume that Snorri's source, the older *Skjoldungasaga*, contained the identical information. This would not necessarily preclude use of the *Langfethgatal* by the latter or, at any rate, oral influence from it.

In other words, it is not possible to find any genuine folk tradition concerning Othin as the progenitor of the Scyldings. And referring to the Scylding legends themselves, we are unable to point out a single instance of any special relation of the race to the god. Quite on the contrary, the cycle is characterized by its lack of connection with any divinity. It is only with the Norwegian legends of Harold Wartooth that one of the Scyldings enters into a personal relation with Othin, which relation is specially motivated by the king's birth being the direct result of Othin's help.

Such are the facts; the genuine, and especially the oldest, sources contain nothing else. But in order to appreciate this it is necessary to penetrate the fog of

preconceived opinions which obscures the vision, not only of the learned Icelanders of antiquity, but also of many scholars of to-day. Seized by a Romantic admiration for the grand conception of a descent of the godhead among men, and for that distant antiquity when every legend was a myth of divinities, they devoted their energies to tracing every connection of the lives of heroes to the world of gods and found in this relation the real mythic kernel of the legends — without taking into due consideration the limitations and unequal value of their sources. And wherever the sources did not suffice, “resemblances” were pointed out which were to demonstrate that the hero had an inherent connection with this or that divinity.

The question of divine heroes and of heroes of divine origin requires to be investigated anew, and without preconceived notions, for the whole domain of Teutonic tradition. At this place I confine myself to Scyld's relation to the world of gods.

According to an Icelandic source, Scyld married the goddess Gefion. The only authority for this is Snorri Sturlason's *Ynglingasaga* (c. 5). We are told that Othin conquered Saxland and distributed it among his sons. Then he wandered northward to the island of Funen, where he settled in Othinsey, and sent out Gefion to discover new lands. She received permission from King Gylfi of Sweden to take possession of all the land she could plow up. So she plowed up a piece of land and let her oxen draw it out into the sea opposite Othinsey, “and it was called Zealand; there she lived afterwards; her Scyld married, the son of Othin, who dwelled at Leire.”

It is surprising to hear of Scyld married to a goddess who in really old sources appears among the divinities of Valhalla; for he himself is never mentioned among them. It is suspicious that this information appears only as an item in the learned theory of the immigration of the gods. The matter becomes still more doubtful when we consider that this information — so important in Danish history — is not found in the *Skiöldungasaga*, which is an older source, but only in Snorri, i.e., that author who takes the greatest liberties in adapting traditions. This same Snorri had already in an earlier work given information about the nature of Gefion. In his *Edda* he writes “Gefion is a maiden; and they who die as maidens are gathered to her.”\* At that time, then, he knew nothing about her marriage to Scyld. Only when elaborating his immigration theory in all its details did Snorri refer Gefion’s visit with Gylfi to the immigration of the *Æsir*. Thereby it became necessary to have Scyld and Gefion live together as husband and wife; for Gefion would then have gotten her piece of land from Gylfi at the same time as Othin set his son Scyld as ruler over the land.

There is still another Icelandic source which has been thought to testify to Scyld’s divine origin — the monument which designates him as “the god of the people of Scania.” This expression is found in some short extracts from the priest Styrmir’s work about Olaf the Saint: “King Olaf converted all this realm to Christianity; he destroyed all sacrifices and all idols, such as Thor, the god of the English, Othin the god of the Saxons, Skiöld, the god of the Scanians,

\* Cf. also the first chapter of *Sn. Edda* in which the plowing of Gefion is related entirely apart from the immigration of the *Æsir*. This piece is not supposed to be by Snorri himself but, nevertheless, testifies to the folk-form of this myth.

Frey, the god of the Swedes, Gothorm, the god of the Danes, and many other abominations of idol worship, both cliffs and sacrifice altars, forests, waters, and trees, and all other sacrifices, both great and small." \*

This is a very strange piece of information, both because of the casual manner in which it is mentioned in King Olaf's labors of Christianizing Norway, and because of the strangeness of its contents. Is it possible that this author, living in the thirteenth century (or possibly some later copyist of his work), had at hand genuine and important information which had not been at the disposal of Snorri and the author of the *Skiöldungasaga*?

We must first ascertain how much of this agrees with the general Icelandic tradition. There is no difficulty about *Freyr Sviá goð*, nor about *Óðinn Saxa goð*; for many sources agree about Othin having founded a Saxon kingdom on his peregrinations, i.e., instituted his cult there. The other statements present more difficulty. *Þór Engilsmanna goð* scarcely corresponds to any reality, for all sources indicate Othin to be the god of the Anglo-Saxons. *Gothorm* as god of the Danes deviates still further from all certain information at our disposal. *Scyld*, finally, as *Skánunga goð* is hardly credible, since all other sources, whether Danish, Icelandic, or English, know of him only as a human being; and if he really had been venerated in Denmark he would scarcely have been permitted to continue his life in the hero legends after the introduction of Christianity. Add to this that Gothorm and Scyld are real persons' names, whereas no cult name of a god is ever used at the same time as a name for a human being.† Hence he cannot have been the "god of the Scanians."

Also, we must remember that the Icelanders really knew nothing about the cult of heathen gods in Denmark. Snorri and perhaps also his predecessors merely etymologize on the name of the city of Odense (*Óðinsey*). Real information concerning the divinities and

\* *Flateyrbók*, iii, 246: *Oláfr konungr cristnaði þetta ríki allt, aull blót braut hann niðr ok aull goð. sem þór Engilsmanna goð ok Óðin Saxa goð ok Skiöld Skánunga goð ok Frey Sviá goð ok Goðorm Dana goð, etc.*

† Concerning this well-known truth, cf., among others, Steenstrup, *Hist. tidsskrift*, 6th series, vi, 355; where it is, however, formulated less correctly that persons never bear the names of divinities. Persons may indeed be called *Bragi*, *Víðarr*, *Iðunn*, *Gefn*. Concerning *Skiöld* as a man's name, cf. O. Nielsen, *Oldd. personnavne*, p. 85; Lind, *Norsk-isl. dopnamn*, p. 917.

sacrifices of the Danes must be sought in foreign sources, in German, Frankish, English, and Arabic. It would be strange indeed if the priest Styrmir should all of a sudden have acquired special and strange knowledge concerning the cults of "Gothorm" and "Skiöld"!

The case is more likely this, that the author of this item distributes gods as he sees fit, according to the method current, that is, that of the Langfethgatal and of Snorri. He places Othin's son Thor where there is still a place free, that is in England; and makes Othin's Scyld the ruler and "god" of the Danes so as to form a parallel to his brother Frey in Upsala. "Gothorm," a name associated nowhere else with the Æsir must be a misunderstanding. Perhaps *Frey Sula goð ok Goðorm* conceals a Latin phrase *deus Sueorum et Gothorum* which the translator may have read *Gothorm*, adding *Dana goð*.

Most scholars will no doubt acknowledge now that Scyld owes his elevation to the dignity of a god to a purely literary process, in order to be a fit associate for his "brother" Ingvifrey, and will henceforth be somewhat more careful in basing their conclusions on this curious "source" for Northern mythology. It is more defensible to emphasize the connection between Scyld and Scania; for in the Anglo-Saxon tradition also there is a certain connection between the Scyld-Scef legend and "Scania" or "Scandinavia." But, taking our stand on the explanation of Styrmir's item of information offered above, it seems more natural to assume, rather, that the author wished to distribute the lands between his "Skiöld" and his apocryphal "Gothorm"; or that he assigned to "Skiöld" a province other than Funen (which was the seat of Othin) or Zealand (which was created and owned by Gefion. However, this is of lesser importance in this connection: we meant to investigate the claim of Scyld being a "god" and have seen that in this respect the passage is altogether of no value.

As our general conclusion we may state that Scyld's character, family relations, and exploits, such as they are described in Icelandic literature, are not based on ancient tradition, but represent new, even literary, attempts to provide him with the history he lacked. The legends handed down knew him only as the progenitor.

## 9. THE ORIGIN OF THE SCYLD LEGEND

We have now examined the changing forms of the Scyld legend and shall essay to combine our observations into a connected whole.

The basic element in the legend is Scyld's rôle as the progenitor of the Danish royal house of the Scylding, hence his warlike character. The varying ingredients of it are the single events in his career. Like waves of the sea which rise and fall, there arise in the course of time three legends, or legendary cycles, which later disappear without one having influenced the other. The old epic poetry knows of the royal infant's arrival on board a ship, and of his departure into the unknown. There are, then, the warrior legends with the bear fight as their climax; and finally, the theory of an immigration of the *Æsir* makes him a son of Othin who dwelled at Leire. Among these motifs the one of the ship journey seems richest and the one which most fully gives expression to the idea of a progenitor; but even this motif is hazy. The fact is that the conception of a progenitor from beyond the sea is common to a number of peoples of the North Sea littoral; but there is divergence about his name: Scaef, Scyld, Ing, "Swan-Knight." The origin of this conception is probably to be sought in a cult of the sheaf (*Scéaf*) as the divinity of agricultural fertility whose departure at harvest time is celebrated on rivers and by the sea. This cult was in the course of time degraded to an ancestor-myth, and the conception of a journey of the dead to a realm beyond the sea was blended with it. Among the Danes, Ing seems to have been the original bearer of this theme, and when

this myth about him died out a new hero, Scyld, a figure of the Migration Period, was elevated to the rank of progenitor of the royal race. This Scyld, again, as we have seen in Anglo-Saxon genealogies — in a relatively historic time — exchanges places with Scaef, his supposed father and thus the earliest progenitor of the royal family. On the other hand the journey beyond the sea grew in the North to become separate legends about Haki and Sigurth hring. All this shows the conceptions of a progenitor in a state of continuous flux, the epic material streaming from one hero to another, and one hero possessing different epic motifs at different times. This is in the highest degree the case with Scyld. The heroic progenitor and his individual exploits have not grown from the same root as an organic whole.

The only fixed point in all this is the connection between Scyld and the Scyldings.

No doubt seems possible that the name of Scyld, Old Norse *Skiöld*, is connected with the word shield (Old Norse *skiöldr*). This is said in so many words only by the learned Sven Aggison, who informs us that the king received that name because he shielded the boundaries of his empire. The reason for the fact that no other source says anything about his name is probably because the meaning of the word “*Skiöld*” was only of secondary importance. On the other hand, all sources agree in emphasizing the fact that the race was called after him. The main import of his name lay in its reminding one of the entire family of the Scyldings.\*

\* Saxo, p. 24: *ut ab ipso ceteri Danorum reges communi quodam vocabulo Scioldungi nuncuparentur; cf. Sven, c. i; a quo primum modis islandensibus Skioldunger sunt reges nuncupati; þaðan er sá ætt komin, er Skiöldungar heita,*



This opens up the possibility of finding, or at any rate glimpsing, the origin of the figure of Scyld. It must be closely connected with the appearance in history of the Scyldings, whether now they were named after him or — as is also possible — his name was invented to form an explanation of theirs.

In the Northern sources *Skjoldungar* is the name of the royal stock of the Danes during the heroic period, but in *Beowulf* the term *Scildungas*, *Scyldingas* has a wider significance. It is very often used about the whole people of the Danes. We read, e.g.: "The Danes slew him, the bold Scyldings maintained the battlefield"; and: "Fleeing he sought our South-Dane folk, over surge of ocean the Honor-Scyldings." For the king of the Danes we find in one passage the expression "the old Scylding," but elsewhere always "the lord of the Scyldings," "the king of the Scyldings," "the warden of the Scyldings," "the protection of the Scyldings," "the friend of the Scyldings." Scyldings is the martial and poetic term for the Danes. It is used especially about the warriors of the royal castle, but contains no more than a suggestion of specially referring to the royal family.\*

Sn. *Edda*, 26, 374, 522; *Arngrim*, c. i; etc.; *Hrólfs saga*, c. iii (in stanzas): *æt Skjoldunga*. In *Beowulf*, *passim*: *Scyldingas*, *Scildungas*; no special mention is made of their being named after Scyld, but the family or tribal names in *-ing* are so prominent in Anglo-Saxon poetry that there is no room for doubting that the poet appreciated the two as belonging together.

\* Designations of the king: *gamela Scylding*, 1793, 2106; *wine Scyldinga*, 30, 148, 170, 1184, 2027, 2102; *eodor Sc.*, 428, 664; *helm Sc.*, 371, 456, 1322; *fréa Sc.*, 291, 351, 500, 1167; *lód Sc.*, 1654, 2160; *þéoden Sc.*, 1676, 1872. *Scyldingas* and *Dens* are frequently used side by side in the same sense: 428, 464, 598, 1419, 1711, 2053. *þéod-Scyldingas*, 1020 (*die ein grosses volk bildenden Scyldinge*, Holder). The plural form is never applied to the kings

In Anglo-Saxon poetry, these names in *-ing* are on the division line between designating the royal race and the host of the warriors, with the meaning of chieftain somewhat preponderating. Thus *Scilfingas*, the Swedish kings, and mere family names, such as *Helmingas*, *Wulfingas*, *Hócingas*. *Scyldingas* is a term resembling the others, but with this difference that in it the main stress is laid on the whole people or the war host.

In Northern poetry, viz., the lays of the Viking Age, there is one instance of a similar relation: in the lays of Helgi Hundingsbani the word *Ylfingar* designates both the chieftain and his band of warriors. But as regards most of the names, such as *Skiöldungar*, *Skilfingr*, *Ynglingr*, connection with the royal house is so firmly established that the poet may even use these words as synonyms for "king" in general. This aristocratic exclusiveness seems to represent a later stage. At all events the progenitor Ing(vi) was not, to start with, claimed only by the Swedish royal house but was, rather, the ancestor of the whole nation.

We have, therefore, good reason to cling to the view, toward which our oldest sources point, that the term *skiöldungar*, *scildungas* designates the troops of the Danish king, or the warriors of the Danes. In itself this

but only to the people; this is true also of the term *éðel Scyldinga* (914) in juxtaposition with *hæleða ríce* ("heroes' land, home of the Scyldings"; cf. 617 *éast-Dena éðel-weard* "the East-Danes' warden"; *weard Scyldinga*, 229 ("a Scylding warden," cf. 242); *witan Scyldinga*, 779 ("the councillors of the Danes"; *witan* designate in Ags. the representatives of the people as against the king); *ides Scyldinga*, 1169 ("the Scylding queen"). From the simple name of Danes (*Dene*) the term *Scyldingas* is differentiated only by never being used in geographical compounds (as South, East, West-, North-, Sea-Danes) but only with the honorific and specially martial elements *dr-*, *hero-*, *sigo-*, *þéod-*.

name fits excellently, meaning precisely "shieldmen." In order to find parallels for such a name of a people we do not need to go even as far as the Romans, whose name of honor was *quirites*, i.e., "spearmen." In the Widsith, *sweorðweras* ("sword-men") is used parallel with Saxons, and *wicingas*, with Wærnas or Heaðobards.\* Also the real names of tribes are frequently reminders of their favorite weapon or peculiar dress, thus Saxons, Langobards, Hattvarii ("helmet-bearers") etc.; or in some other way contain the warlike name of honor of the tribe.†

As to its elements of composition, *scyldingas*, *scildungas* corresponds exactly to such fictitious names of peoples as *Brondingas* and *Rondingas* ("swordmen" and "shieldmen") in Widsith. One may also compare the Old Norse *hildingar* "warriors." In general, the ending *-ingr*, *-ungr* forms honorific epithets for men and especially for warriors.‡ The most obvious explanation of the term *skjoldungar* for the troops of the Danes is, therefore, "shieldmen."

The name of Scyld has thus found its explanation. He is the eponymous founder of the race of the Scyldings. As we know, it is frequently the case that the name of the people antecedes that of its supposed progenitor invented to explain the name. There is no reason to suppose Scyld to be an historic personage, for he is not in any way connected with any known figure.

\* Cf. Mullenhoff, *Beowulf*, p. 97.

† Erdmann, *Heimat der Angels* (Upsala, 1890), p. 76.

‡ O. Nd. *qðlingr*, *mildingr*, *maringr*, *enillingr*, *høfðingr*, *qldungr* (see also in Danish: *aldungr*, *prudenciores totius provincie*). The same ending in *kyrningr* ("man with a horn," or "a ram"); *hornungr* ("child in corner," "bastard son.")

No real event is associated with his name and the oldest legend about him only expresses the conception that he is the founder of the race. And not even this legend is intimately identified with his existence but seems transferred to him from a still older progenitor.

From this point to start with, we begin to see a connection between the various manifestations of his figure. He was created as a reflection of the nature of the Scylding kings and their warriors, and his figure changes with the development of the Scylding legends. Only his warlike character remains unchanged. It is connected with the essential character of the Scylding race, and especially with its historic origin. He is, as it were, a standard for the Danish chieftains and their hosts that in the period of the Migration of Nations subjugated the Heruli and the Heathobards.

This oldest epic element amalgamates with his name. These hosts that begin to feel their strength and victoriousness picture to themselves a progenitor from unknown lands and endowed with supernatural strength. Just as the legend of the Swan-Knight arose during the period of the crusades in order to shed lustre on Godfrey of Bouillon, the leader of lowly origin but of great contemporary fame, so likewise the Scyld legend may be the expression for the growing might of the Danish rulers and for their feeling themselves to be a new power.

We do not know how early the name of the Scyldings originated and when the figure of Scyld arose. There are reasons for believing that the Danish realm antedates the struggles of the fifth and sixth centuries.

However, it is the race of Halfdan which is associated with the name of Scyld and the Scyldings, and not the scattered legends of older Danish kings. Another chronological hold is furnished by the ship-journey motif (in so far as it seems to have belonged to Ingvi before being attached to Scyld—its reference to the older progenitor is seen in the Rune Song). A still older bearer of this motif may be seen in Sceaf, who in name corresponds to the old cult of the sheaf of grain which was sent down the Thames. In him we may see the divinity of the fields rationalized into the progenitor of the Scyldings, or rather of the Teutonic race as a whole, or of the North Sea peoples.\*

The connection of the legend with the energetic national movements by which the Danes for the first time gained importance explains also its disappearance: in later times the elasticity was wanting which is necessary to create legends about the sudden revelation of heroic strength. Denmark grew into a united kingdom under the famous royal race of Halfdan and Hrolf. Then Scyld became the ancient progenitor whose figure is half lost in the mists of time, in contrast with the clear shapes of later generations. Instead of being the independent expression for the awakening might of his people he represents a mere anticipation of the energy of his successors. For that reason he shows early strength in his bear-fight and foreshadows Uffi's single combat with the Saxons. Later (in the twelfth century?),

\* One might also entertain the idea that the sheaf of grain on the shield was the real origin of the name of the progenitor. However, in the ceremony on the river, the sheaf is the real person and the shield only the chance method of locomotion.

when the legendary lore connected with him is more dimly remembered, he appears also as the legislator in the same manner as Frothi the Peaceful. And finally he is by the Icelandic historians made to play a rôle in their immigration theory which assigns definite possessions of land to the Æsir and has him select his residence at Leire as the son of Othin. But it is only a lifeless doll or unmeaning supernumerary the learned men shove about at will; he himself — the living epic figure — sailed away long ago to the land no hero 'neath heaven has ever seen, but who had shown his wondrous might for a short while among his people.

Such is the picture of Scyld's career which may be drawn on the basis of the information in our sources. Even though these do not flow abundantly, considering the remarkable fluctuations it exhibits, yet every part of the picture is in harmony with the general epic ideals of the respective periods — both the grandiose heroic features of the epic lay, the realistic details of the hero legends, and the investigations and combinations of the Icelandic historians.

It is a different picture of Scyld which is seen in most textbooks and articles, viz., the Romantic conception of him which we owe in the first place to Kemble and then to Müllenhoff.\* According to this view, Scyld is a progenitor dating from far earlier times than the rise of the Danes. His is merely a different name for one of the other manifestation of the ancient hero who is also called Scaef and Beov (Beowulf), or Tætva, and who

\* Kemble, translation of *Beowulf* (1837), introduction; Müllenhoff, *Beowulf*, pp. 6 ff.

## THE HEROIC LEGENDS OF DENMARK

the Langobardians becomes the foundling-king. All these are but so many names for the great figure of Ingvi or, when considered as a divinity, Frey, the god of fertility; and he lives again the King Frothi of the Frothi Peace. This heroic figure appearing in so many shapes conceals a bit of nature symbolism: he is the lord of light and of warmth who comes to the land every spring, who drives off and defeats the trolls of the evil powers of nature, teaches men agriculture, shipbuilding, royal power, and battle; but himself finally succumbs to the trolls and dies in autumn. Amid lamentations of the people his body is sent away over the sea in order to return new-born next spring.

I shall not enter here on a refutation of this theory. It has been attacked already by others, even if scholars have not been able wholly to shake it off.\* It contains, in fact, a modicum of truth. Only, we must remember that we are dealing with an evolution which extends over many centuries and with legends which range all the way from the conception of a divinity of the year's crop to that of diverse progenitors and which frequently represent merely the transference of a legendary motif from one personage to another. It is the Romantic theory of an original unity of these legends which vitiates their correct interpretation.

At this place I merely wish to emphasize that, in the case of the Scyld legend, an investigation of the material in the light of the historical development of its poetic

\* A sharp and effective criticism is made by R. C. Boer, *Arkiv. f. n. F.*, xix, 28-44; cf. B. Simons, *Beowulf* (Ghent, 1890), pp. 83-87.

motifs proves fatal in all points which are vital to the nature myth theory: (1) Scyld may not, on the basis of our sources, be disassociated from Denmark and the Scyldings as long as we have records of the oral handing down of the old heroic poetry; (2) the motif of the sheaf of grain under the child's head is due to a late etymologizing of a foundling legend; (3) Scyld was made the son of Othin only on the strength of learned theories; (4) the information that he was venerated as a god is to be found only in a later source which is altogether confused and unreliable, besides being dependent on the same theory of the immigration of the gods. But the best proof of the falsity of the current Romantic conception of Scyld seems to me to lie in the fact that one can draw his picture or, rather, read off his life, from the sources in such fashion that it will at every point agree with the general conceptions and ideals of our heroic poetry. To assume any symbolism behind this legend is altogether superfluous.



## CHAPTER IX

### THE PEACE OF KING FROTHI

#### I. KING FROTHI AND HIS GOLD MILL.

THE thought of a *Fróðafriðr* (peace of King Frothi) lives on throughout Northern antiquity. When a Norwegian ruler of the tenth century enforces peace in the whole land he is compared with the famed King Frothi; and whenever a feud begins we find in heroic poetry the expression: "The peace of Frothi is sun-dered." \*

It is a peculiar fact, however, that in Northern tradi-tion there are two kings of this name who claim to be the king of the "Frothi Peace." One stands at the be-ginning of the Scylding line and is distinguished by his wealth, more especially by the gold he gains by grind-ing it out of his mill. The other is found about the mid-dle of the line. Most emphasis is laid on his stern ad-ministration of justice and the immense extent of his realm. The Icelanders make a distinction between the two by calling the first "Peace-Frothi" (*Frið-Fróði*), the other, "Frothi the Peaceable" (*hinn friðsami*, Old Danish *hin frithgothæ*).

The legends will not tolerate two kings Frothi as the rulers of the "Frothi Peace;" so the traditions tend to give preference to one of them and to eliminate the other.

\* *Völuspá*, stanza 10, composed by the skald Einar skálaglamm in honor of Earl Hakon the Great about 980. *Hálgakviða Hundingsbana*, i, stanza 13.

The Icelanders favor the first one, attributing to him the Frothi Peace, the gold, and even the administration of justice, and relegating the other king to ordinary human rank. The legends current along the coast of Norway, preserved by Saxo, decide as definitely for the second Frothi and assign to the first the rôle of a mere sea king. Danish tradition up to the time of Saxo does away with the first one entirely, referring only to the second as *hin frithgothæ*.

The traditions are right. Only one of them ought to be the king of the Golden Age; for it lies in the very conception of a Golden Age that it cannot appear and disappear ever and anon. It existed once, in times long ago. The trouble is that we cannot get rid of either one of the two. Even the Icelanders who with their customary logic placed the Frothi Peace in the very earliest times when the gods still walked the earth, cannot get around the fact that the other King Frothi is called *hinn frithsami*, and that his deeds are essentially like those ascribed to the mythical Frothi *hinn friðgoði* of Danish tradition. Saxo's Norwegian legend makes the first Frothi a viking ruler. Medieval Danish tradition does away with the first Frothi; but an older source, the Biarkamal, alludes to him and his golden seed.

If, then, we cannot get rid of either of the kings Frothi, it follows that the two are at bottom the same person; for obviously there is but one Golden Age. We will be able to understand how there came to be two Frothis, once we have gained an insight into the duplication seen all through the Scylding tradition as shown in the "older" and "younger" line of Scylding

kings. For the first I point only to these two rival kings as the cause of instability and that tendency to form new traditions which, as we have seen, takes a very different direction among the different peoples of the North.

It is not so difficult to distribute the various legendary features between the two kings. The first of them incontestably has a right to the magic quern. The Icelanders attribute to him also the story of the ring which was placed on the highroad without any one daring to lay hands on it; but since both Norwegian and Danish legends tell this of Frothi the Peaceful, it will not do to deprive him of it. The motif of the security of the realm likewise belongs by rights to the king of the peaceful administration of justice and not to the gold king. To Frothi the Peaceful we may assign, then, the ring on the highroad (Danish and Norwegian tradition), the laws (Danish and possibly Norwegian), and (in harmony with all the sources) a violent death caused by the attack of a cow or stag. The composite stories about him are limited to a more definite area: the Norwegian story of King Frothi and Eric the Shrewd-spoken. It will not pay to explore here the original stratum of this Frothi tradition. As to King "Frith-Frothi" the problem is simple enough: he has only one poetic motif, the gold mill, which epitomizes his entire being and his fate, his wealth and his tragic end, and on that we must concentrate all our investigations.

Our oldest sources for this conception are the allusions in ancient lays. The oldest one is probably that in the Biarkamal (about 900?): "The nephew (or offspring)

of Frothi sowed his gold on the Fyri-Plains" (see p. 117). Egil Skallagrimsson uses the "flour of Frothi" as a kenning for gold in his *Hofuðlausn*, composed in praise of King Eric Bloody-Axe of Northumberland (about 950). Eyvind skaldaspillir uses in the same sense the phrase "the flour of the unglad maidens of Frothi," alluding thus not only to the myth of Frothi but also to the special features which characterize the myth in the "Quern Song" (from which his expression undoubtedly derives).

The Quern Song, or as it is named in ancient times, the "Song of Grotti" (*Grottasöngur*) \* is one of the most famous among the Eddic poems. It dates, probably, from the middle of the tenth century and is preserved in a few MSS. of the Snorra Edda. Grotti is the name of the quern, and the song is sung by two giant maidens who must turn the mill of wealth for King Frothi.

1. Now are they come  
to the King's high hall,  
the foreknowing twain,  
Fenia and Menia;  
in bondage by Frothi,  
Frithleif's son,  
these sisters mighty  
as slaves are held.

2. To moil at the mill  
the maids were bid,  
to turn the grey stone  
as their task was set;

\* I have preferred the spelling *Grotti* (though *Grótti* is given in an old velum) as the name is unquestionably related to Afs. *grindan* 'to grind' (cf. S. Bugge in *Seenska Landemålen*, vol. iv, part 2, p. 239; also, a root *grut* is possible, cf. Hellquist, *ibid.*, vol. xx, part 1, p. 189).

to lag in their labor  
 he would never allow them,  
 the song of the slaves  
 unceasing would hear.

3. The chained ones churning  
 ay chanted their song:  
 "Let us right the mill  
 and raise the millstones."

He gave them no rest,  
 to grind on he bade them.

4. They sang as they swung  
 the swift-wheeling stones,  
 till of Frothi's thralls  
 most fell asleep.\*  
 Then Menis quoth,  
 at the quern she stood:

5. "Gold and good hap  
 grind we for Frothi,  
 a hoard of wealth  
 on the wishing-mill;  
 he shall sit on gold,  
 he shall sleep on down,  
 he shall wake to joy:  
 well had we ground then!

6. Here shall no one  
 harm his neighbor,  
 nor bale-thoughts brew  
 for others' bane,  
 nor swing his sharp sword  
 to smite a blow,  
 though his brother's slayer  
 bound he should find."

\* They ground by night time, after the remaining servants of Frothi had gone to their rest (*S. Grædtrig, Sam. Edda*, 2d ed., p. 259).

7. . . . .

(But still Frothi would grant them no rest.)

“ Sleep ye shall not  
more than cock in summer,  
or longer than I  
a lay may sing.”

Quoth Menia: \*

8. “ A fool wert thou, Frothi,  
and frenzied of mind,  
the time thou, men’s friend,  
us maidens didst buy;  
for strength didst choose us  
and sturdy looks,  
but didst not reck  
of our dread race.
9. Hardy was Hrungni,  
but his sire more so;  
more thews than they  
old Thiazi had.  
Ithi and Orni  
are of our kin:  
to brothers of giants  
we were born in the mountains.
10. Scarce had Grotti come  
out of grey mountain,  
from out of the earth  
the iron-hard slab,  
nor had mountain-maids now  
to turn the millstone  
if we had not first  
found it below.

\* The author has added according to his own judgment the name of the giant-maidens who are speaking the stanza in question. With certainty we know only that Menia first sings about the good fortune ground out by the mill, and that a new voice begins with stanza 17.

11. Nine winters we grew  
beneath the ground;  
under the mountains  
we mighty play-sisters  
did strive to do  
great deeds of strength:  
huge boulders we budged  
from their bases.
12. The rocks we rolled  
out of giants' realm;  
the fields below  
shook with their fall;  
we hurled from the heights  
the heavy quern-stone,  
the swift-rolling slab,  
so that men might seize it.
13. But since then we  
to Sweden fared,  
we foreknowing twain,  
and fought among men;  
byrnies we slit  
and bucklers shattered,  
we won our way  
through grey-coated warriors.

14, 15.\*

\* Stanzas 14 and 15:

"One King we overthrew,  
enthroned the other,  
to Guthorm the good  
we victory granted;  
stern was the struggle  
ere Knui was struck.

A full year thus  
we fared among men,  
our name was known  
among noble heroes;  
sharp spears we shot  
through linden-shields,  
drew blood from wounds  
and reddened brands."

These stanzas seem to have been inserted into the lay about the giant maidens from some other source. Did there really exist legends in which supernatural beings participated in the feuds of Swedish local princes? (Sv. Grundtvig in his lectures used to consider these stanzas, and the one preceding, as not genuine).

16. Now we are come  
to the king's high hall,  
without mercy made  
to turn the mill;  
mud soils our feet,  
frost cuts our bones;  
at the peace-quern we drudge;  
dreary is it here.

17. The stone now let stand;  
my stint is done;  
I have ground my share,  
grant me a rest."

Quoth Menia:

"The stone must not stand,  
our stint is not done,  
before to Frothi  
his fill we ground.

18. Our hands shall hold  
the hard spear-shafts,  
weapons gory:  
Awake thou, Frothi!  
Awake thou, Frothi,  
if listen thou wilt  
to our songs of eld,  
to our ancient lore.

19. My eye sees fire  
east of the castle;  
battle-cries ring out,  
beacons are kindled!  
Hosts of foemen  
hither will wend,  
to burn down the hall  
over the king's head.

20. No longer thou  
Leire shalt hold,  
rings of red gold



## THE HEROIC LEGENDS OF DENMARK

nor the mill of riches.  
Harder the handle  
let us hold, sister;  
our hands are not warm yet  
with warriors' blood.

21. My father's daughter  
doughtily ground;  
for the death of hosts  
did she foresee;  
even now the strong booms  
burst from the quern,  
the stanch iron stays —  
yet more strongly swing! "

Answered Fenia:

22. " Yet more strongly swing:  
the son of Yrsa  
Frothi's blood will crave  
for the bane of Halldan —  
he Hrolf is hight  
and is to her  
both son and brother  
as both of us know."

23. The mighty maidens  
they ground amain,  
strained their young limbs  
of giant strength;  
the shaft-tree quivered,  
the quern toppled over,  
the spinning millstones  
sprang asunder.

24. Quoth the mighty maiden  
of the mountain giants:  
" Ground have we now,  
more than thou needest;  
we have toiled enough  
at turning the mill."

The general conception of a wishing-mill is here seen developed into a myth embodied in an elaborate poem where all details are illustrated with poetic ability. The principal new features are these: (1) The magic quern is imagined as so large that mill slaves of unusual strength are needed for turning it; (2) man has chained the forces of untamed nature for this purpose, and their rebellion causes the death of the owner and the destruction of the mill; (3) this rebellion is seen in the moment when Frothi tries to extend their labors beyond the space of a human day's work; (4) Frothi's palace and power are destroyed by the sudden arrival of an army of enemies, and thus the Frothi Peace comes to an end; (5) this motif is combined with the main idea of the poem by making the curse of the mountain maidens give the magic properties of the mill a new direction, the arrival or creation of a hostile army; (6) this curse is not limited to the annihilation of Frothi, but is extended to the tragedy of the entire Scylding race: the death of Halfdan by his brother's treachery and all that follows after (see above, p. 304 ff.). (Possibly the Frothi mentioned here is imagined as the incarnation of the debased ruler of the Golden Age ?) The erotic tragedy connected with the birth of Hrolf is, it would seem, thought of as the culmination of the family tragedy, showing his virtue and the rehabilitation of the race.

Some of these new features must be the invention of the poet himself, especially the last; the history of the Scyldings is so loosely connected with the life of Frothi that without the strong asseveration of a poet concerning that connection they would have parted company

altogether. The poet's interest is, however, centered most strongly on the myth of the giant-maidens, and here his personal contribution must be largest — but to this question we shall return later.

Most independent of the poet's own interest is, probably, the arrival of the hostile army before Frothi's castle. Laying most stress, as he does, on the motives which cause the mountain maidens to grind out this army, he quite obscures the fact that this is an organic feature of the myth, antedating the poet's invention — as will become clear from an examination of other sources.

The Icelanders not only knew the Quern Song but also had a corresponding prose tradition, which is preserved in the Snorra Edda: Frothi had a pair of millstones so great that no one could turn them. This mill gave whatever he who ground commanded. It had been given him by Hengikiopt, a giant. During a visit in Sweden (with King Fiolnir \*) he bought two strong bondmaids to turn it. He ordered them to grind him gold and peace and happiness, but granted them no rest. Then they sang the Grotti Song, "and before it was at an end they ground an army against Frothi, so that even in that night came a sea king, named Mysing, and killed Frothi: that was the end of the Frothi Peace. Mysing carried away with him both the mill and the slaves Fenia and Menia. He told them to grind

\* Fiolnir is understood by the Icelanders to be a contemporary of Frothi because both head a dynasty (the Scyldings and the Ynglings). A visit paid to Fiolnir by Frothi causing the latter's death is mentioned already in the *Ynglingatal* (of the latter part of the ninth century). Only through this chronological circumstance has Fiolnir come to figure in the Grotti legend. He takes no real part in its poetical action.

salt. At midnight they asked him whether he had not salt enough, but he bade them grind on. They ground but a little while more before the ships went down. At that spot there is now a "sea-mill" (*svelgr*) in the sea, where the waters rush in through the eye of the mill-stone — and so the sea grew salt."

Some of the Edda MSS. have a much shorter version ending with the words: "The sea king Mysing took the mill Grotti and made it grind white salt on his ships until they sank in the Pentland Firth. Since that time there is an eddy (the *svelgr*), where the sea rushes through the eye of Grotti." \*

It is clear that this story must have its home near the Pentland Firth, between Scotland and the Orkney Islands, originating, probably, among the Scandinavian inhabitants of these islands, or at any rate, among seafaring people familiar with the phenomenon. This observation holds true not only with the short localized form of the story, but also with the longer version, according to which the *svelgr* (a single "sea-mill" or eddy) is caused by the Grotti; such a legend must have a local origin.

The Orkney origin of this legend is confirmed by the fact that in these islands traditions concerning the Grotti are still living in the minds of the people. In 1895, Dr. Jakob Jakobsen, the well-known collector of the remnants of the ancient "Norn" language of the Western Islands, was informed by an old Shetlander

\* The complete texts relating to the Grotti legend are reprinted in Eiríkur Magnússon's paper on the Grottasöngur (*Old-love Miscellany of Orkney, etc.*, iii, 139); also, in the great Arnarnagætan edition of the Snorra Edda, i-ii, and to some extent in the editions of the Poetic Edda.

whose parents had come from the Orkneys (Ronaldsey) that near the most northerly of these islands there was an eddy called "the Swelki." On that spot a mill stood on the bottom of the sea and ground salt; and a legend of Grotti-Fenni and Grotti-Menni was connected with it.\* In the course of later investigations in the Orkneys themselves (South Ronaldsey) he learned about the sea mill in the Pentland Firth grinding salt. In 1900, Mr. A. W. Johnstone was told by a lady from Fair Isle that Grotti Finnie and Lucky Minnie were well-known in her native island, being frequently invoked to frighten naughty children. Although the legend in those parts is in a fragmentary condition, reduced to incoherent survivals, the tenacity of the oral tradition shows how deeply rooted the legend is in these islands.

Outside of the Orkneys neither Mysing nor his salt mill are known to tradition excepting in the songs of the Edda which themselves bear the stamp of Western provenience.

The Mysing traditions, in the form they have come down to us, lay a certain stress on the figures of Menia and Fenia. In this essential point, then, the Mysing story proves to be derived from the Quern Song. In the main points of the action, however, it goes its own way. (1) The destroyer is a definite person, Mysing, not a fantastic army stamped out of the ground by the spell of the mill-maidens; (2) the story has grown by an entire new act: the cause of the saltness of the sea.

\* Here given according to private information from Dr. Jakobsen. Now printed in *Old-lore Miscellany*, iii, 8, by A. W. Johnstone (the circumstance that Grotti-Finnie and Grotti-Minnie turned the mill to make the sea salt was not contained in Dr. Jakobsen's communication to me).

In this last point it certainly represents a later stage than the Quern Song, its attention being centred, not on the peace and the peaceful ruler, but on the mill. The interest in the story, the fairy tale, has absorbed the simple legend and its interest in human problems. As we shall presently see, the motif of the salt mill is a new feature which exists also independently and is here merely joined to the story of the mill. That it was not known to the author of the song is clear enough; for in the last stanzas he lets the wishing-mill go to pieces in the same moment as Frothi's good fortune ends — quite in harmony with his tragic conception of the theme and the mill's proper nature. The salt story must have been added later, probably by one who was not familiar with the Quern Song itself but knew only its chief contents from some prose narrative.

Thus the prose traditions are, in the main, derived either from the Quern Song or an evolution from the stage it represents. In one point only does the prose tradition go back to an older and fuller source: the hostile army is not a mere allusion. It is led by a real person, a man bearing the name *Mýsingr*. This name (meaning "the mouse-grey") is, it must be admitted, scarcely suitable for a hero king, or any human being at all, reminding one, as it does, rather of Old Norse names for cattle.\* The underlying reason for it is to be sought in the unquestionable fact that the King Mýsing who killed Frith-Frothi, and the cow that struck down Frothi the Peaceful are at bottom the same, a proof of their

\* The suffix *-ing* is used most commonly in the formation of names of animals or things. In proper names it occurs in patronymics, elsewhere but infrequently.

identity being that both come up from the sea, a trait characteristic of the mythical animal called the sea-cow or water-bull which, in the popular belief of Denmark, is conceived as a terrible, strong, and dangerous animal. This sea monster undoubtedly fits in the myth of King Frothi: King Mysing is merely a rationalistic explanation of the ancient monster.

Originally, the slayer of King Frothi is simply he who ends the Frothi Peace. In that conception there is no necessary relation to the mill, and through Frothi the Peaceful the sea monster is introduced into the legend, but no mill. However, we must content ourselves here to refer to a more detailed explanation of this point in our discussion of the Younger Scyldings.\*

The last part of the story of Grotti and Mysing is *How the sea grew salt*. This is a different motif, in no wise connected with the peace of Frothi. It is, in fact, a variant of a legend told in different forms in different regions bordering on the North Sea. On the coast of Normandy it is a sorcerer who has a wishing-mill which is stolen from him by a skipper who lets it grind salt but is not able to stop it. His ship sinks and so the sea became salt. The sorcerer may still be seen searching for his mill on the bottom of the sea.† On the coast of Hanover it is a sailor boy who has the wishing-mill given him by his grandmother. He lets it grind out gold money and wheat bread. The skipper robs him of the mill and forces the boy to teach him the magic

\* *Danmarks Heltedigtning*, ii, 37.

† Melusine, ii, 198; *Pourquoi la mer est salée* (this paper contains still other legends from this region discussing the same problem but unrelated to the one in hand).

words. Then he pushes the boy into the sea and commands the mill to grind salt, etc.\*

The same motif is treated in a fairy tale well-known among the Scandinavian and Finnish inhabitants of the Baltic littoral, but very rarely met with in other countries.† The features of this story are: (a) *How the poor man got the mill*: he goes to Hell and receives it in return for a side of bacon which his rich brother had thrown to him contemptuously on a Christmas evening, bidding him to go to Hell with it. (b) *The porridge mill*: The poor man tries his mill, he grinds food and then gold; the rich brother buys the mill for much money and orders it to grind porridge, but as it does not know how to stop it he must give his brother even more money to get rid of it. (c) *The salt mill*: A skipper buys the mill and orders it to grind salt, which he does until the ship sinks. The mill is still grinding on the bottom of the sea, and that is why the sea is salt. A connecting link between (b) and (c) occurs frequently in the tradition; the poor man has the mill grind gold with which he thatches his house so that it shines a long way over the sea; this attracts a skipper, etc.

This fairy tale is composed of an introductory part and two main motifs only slightly connected with one another. The latter part is identical with the North

\* C. and T. Colshorn, *Märchen und sagen* (Hanover, 1854), p. 173, No. 61: *Warum das meerwasser salzig ist*.

† More details about this tale are to be found in the Danish edition (*Danmarks Heltedigtning*, i, 299–305); Grimm, *Märchen*, No. 103, with the *Anmerkungen* by Bolte and Poliuksa (vol. ii, 1914); Aarne, *Verzeichnis der märchentypen*, No. 565 (*FFCommunications*, part 3); Hackman, *Katalog der märchen der finnländischen Schweden*, No. 565 (*FFC*, part 6); Aarne, *Finnische märchenvarianten* (*FFC*, part 5); Aarne, *Die Zaubergaben*, p. 80.



Sea legend: How the sea grew salt. The first part exists in Germany as a fairy tale, independent of the mill and the salt. A typical representative is Grimm's No. 103, *Vom süssen brei*: An old woman in the forest (i.e., a supernatural being) gives a girl a pot that cooks porridge when ordered; once when the mother (in most variants the daughter) is alone at home she is not able to stop the pot and all the town is filled with porridge until at last the other person (in Grimm, the daughter) arrives. In the variant from Hanover it is not a pot but a mill grinding groats porridge. It grinds until the groats cover all the mountain, when the wind comes and sweeps all down on the earth as hail. This is, however, not an original form but a transitional type, containing elements both of the porridge pot and the salt mill.

It seems evident, then, that the Scandinavian legend is a combination of these two stories (of the porridge pot and the salt mill). But there are still other legends of similar contents. A Faroese legend tells of a giantess grinding in her cave and the monotonous noise of it being heard by persons passing by the mouth of the cave.\* (Here, though, it is not necessary to assume that she is grinding gold, since in Northern folklore giants are rich in gold). Even in Arabian folklore there is a story of a mill that grinds money. So it seems probable that conceptions of this kind are found in many scattered regions, the one of King Frothi and the mill Grotti being but one of them.

\* The legend of Givrinarhol (the Cave of the Giantess) in Hammershaimb, *Færøsk anthologi*, i, 332 (translated in *Zeitschrift des Vereins für Volkskunde*, ii, 6).

The Quern Song takes for granted the existence of a mill on which gold (*auðr*) and happiness are ground for Frothi; but the interest of the poet is centered, not on the mill, but on the two giant maidens who must turn it and whose curses produce a host of enemies and a series of calamities. Here, then, are shown his own views on the problem of the legend. It is man in conflict with the forces of nature. He voices this idea by saying that Frothi was unwise in buying his bondmaids for their appearance, regardless of their race. And their race, indeed, is that of the strongest mountain giants. It was a notion familiar to the ancient Scandinavians to imagine the mountains peopled with giants, and the rivers as giant maidens. So we hear of the daughter of Geirrøth who caused her river to rise in a flood when Thor wanted to wade it. In the *Hárbarðsljóð* such river goddesses are referred to in the lines: "They dug ground from deep dales and twisted ropes out of sand."\*

\* It is a common feature in folklore that supernatural beings "twist ropes of sand," a fancy suggested no doubt by the rope-like ripple marks in the sand formed near the shore of the sea or of rivers. In the majority of cases it is the impossibility of the work which created the legend: a ghost, or the devil himself, is ordered to twist ropes of sand and fails to accomplish it, so that the persecuted one escapes. (Similarly in fairy stories, especially Oriental, a person is bidden to perform the impossible task, but he on his part makes another condition which invalidates the command). We have also instances where the supernatural being does perform the task. In an old Danish popular ballad, the sorceress, the mother-in-law of the young wife, says: "When I was young I would go by the seashore and there I would twist a rope of sand"; and with the help of this rope she could go to the moon and draw it down for use in her magic. (Feilberg, *Ordbog over jydske almuesmål*, iii, 25; *Danmarks gamle Folkeviser*, ii, 417; iii, 895; *Z. d. Vereins f. Volkskunde*, xvii, 172). Hence it would be permissible to think that the maidens of the *Hárbarðsljóð* also were such sorceresses; but the next lines about their digging up the deep dales show that the rivers themselves, regarded as animistic beings, are the acting persons.

Similarly the giantesses of the Quern Song are pictured as dwelling for nine years underground, rolling great rocks from their places, and finally precipitating them down over the mountain's edge so that they are strewn over the plain, among them the millstones of Grotti. Then they themselves descended into the land of men, overturning all that made resistance (the poet here uses expressions which describe them as shield-maidens of gigantic race). They break through the battle array of armed hosts, bestowing victory on one king and destroying the other — until they are finally reduced to servitude by mankind. The scattered blocks are used for millstones. The scene thus described is an allegory of the mountain streams, fierce and rebellious in their origin, then losing their natural force, to be at last made to work for man.\*

In their own land the Scandinavians knew only hand-mills. Only such are mentioned in the oldest sources and are found in great numbers in city ruins of the Viking Age. In the western countries, however, especially in England, they must have seen mills worked by streams. In the early Middle Ages these water mills, owing their origin to the last period of Roman civilization, were used quite extensively in western Europe. It is impossible that the Scandinavian invaders of, e.g., Northumberland, should not have acquired, and possibly used, such water mills. In some cases they prob-

\* The view above expressed is in harmony with the name of one of the giantesses, Fenia ('water-maiden'); whereas Menia signifies the 'jewel-maiden.' And whether now the author of the song himself invented these names, or simply had them from some predecessor, it testifies to his being conscious of the watery origin of the two giantesses.

ably introduced them into their own land, though there is no mention of them in Scandinavia until the twelfth century.\*

It is a well-known theme in folklore that the domain of men is definitely limited by the rights of the spirits of nature. We meet with it in utterances such as the following, addressed to men working late in the fields: "The day is yours, the night is mine!" Summer is the time of men on the mountain pastures, the hunter who tarries longest is warned to go home and is threatened that if he stays he will be put into the cooking pot of the giants, for they are the rightful owners of the highlands. The audacious man who tries to clear the forest and build his home there is visited by a swarm of trolls, etc. The Grotti maidens' rebellion is but another instance of this conception of the spirits of nature contesting the advance of men into their domain: the wild mountain streams, tamed in the plains, and forced to slave for man, finally rebel and overthrow the hated mill.

Another set of ideas is often found combined with this dread of the forces of free nature: the thought that these spirits not only defend their own rights but that they stand for the preservation of a moral order in which work and rest are each allotted their own time. The troll's warning: "the night is mine" is spoken to the laborers who have not been permitted by the farmer to leave the harvest field at night. This idea also finds expression in the Quern Song. The giant maidens will-

\* The source material on this point will be found in the Danish original, p. 287.

ingly work as long as it is day, but when Frothi compels them to continue into the night, while all the other servants are sleeping, they finally rise in wrath and turn the mill of fortune into a mill of ruin for his palace and himself by the curses of their song.

The Grotti Song thus contains a grand allegory. This is in no wise strange, as in the cosmogony of the Edda we frequently find just such personifications of natural objects and forces erected into minor divinities.\* At the same time it must be emphasized that the poet has given his creation full human similitude: the giant maidens with the strength and the outworn bodies of slave women — only raised to supernatural stature, and individualized in their actions when they, like gigantic shield-maidens, not only destroy an army of men but also set a new king on the throne.† The poet feels a peculiar sympathy or admiration for these two herculean beings: “Young they were, and giant-hearted (in their impulsive strength)” (*ungar vóru ok í iqtum-móði*).

However, the struggle between the avarice of the king and the rage of his bondmaids does not form the

\* Instances (besides the above-mentioned giant maidens as river goddesses) are: the daughters of Hymi, the frost giant, as personifications of the glacier rivers (*Lokasenna*, stanza 34); Byggvi and Beyla as personifications of the grain (*ibid.*); the mythical boar Sæhrimni, i.e., ‘vapor of the sea’ (*Grímnismál*); the allegorical persons in the palace of Utgartharhloki (*Snorra Edda*). Goddesses of lesser rank are also frequently allegorical, e.g., Eir ‘leechcraft’; Vár ‘oath’; etc. Cf. the *Lay of Svipdag* with the allegorical names of the mythic mountain and its inhabitants.

† The King Knui who is slain is no historical person. His name possibly furnishes a hint as to his origin. Unknown in Old Norse and Old Swedish, it is a characteristic Danish name of the Viking Age (cf. Wimmer, *Danske runemindesmærker*, iv, liii); perhaps the stanza contains an allusion to a Danish invader in Sweden.

total contents of the song. In one of the last stanzas other facts from the history of the Scyldings are mentioned. The reasons for the connection between these scenes are easily understood. There is an allusion to a Halfdan who was slain by a Frothi. The key to this allusion is to be found in the first chapters of the saga of Hrolf kraki, which furnishes us the full story; King Halfdan of Leire is slain by his own brother, Frothi, who also tries to murder the young princes Helgi and Hroar, but is finally surprised by them and burned in his own hall. In the second place there is mentioned in this stanza a "son of Yrsa," i.e., the famous Hrolf kraki; who is affirmed to be both her son and brother. The difference between the usual version and that of the Quern Song is that in the lay Hrolf is the avenger of Halfdan's death, whereas in the sagas, the avengers are Halfdan's sons, Helgi and Hroar, the father and the uncle of Hrolf.

So far the text of the Quern Song presents no difficulties (or, rather, no longer presents any difficulties, the blunders of the scribe who did not understand his original having been successfully corrected by the editors). It is only the connection between the main action and this part which has troubled editors and commentators. Some make this stanza to mean — certainly without sufficient foundation — that Frith-Frothi is identical with the treacherous Frothi who slew his brother Halfdan, and they assume the curse of the giant maidens to be a part of the revenge for this deed, so that the fratricide would thus be the cause of the end of the Frothi Peace.

Other commentators are certain that the stanza has nothing to do with Frothi and his period of peace. Then they proceed, as is so often done in our "critical" time, as follows: all matters the editors do not understand, whether from want of knowledge or from a lack of poetic appreciation, they assert to be interpolated! The syllogism by which, in this case, the result is arrived at is something like this: before the Halldan stanza the initial ruin of the quern is spoken of; after it, the complete ruin of it is described. Very well! that which comes between these two stanzas cannot be the poet's own work — it must be an interpolation!

For the spontaneous feeling of the hearer or reader all these speculations are superfluous. The chief matter of the song is that the great Frothi Peace comes to an end when invaders (King Mysing's pirates) slay the ruler of the Golden Age. Every one who is familiar with the heroic legends must take it for granted that no sooner does it come to an end than an Iron Age of strife will come in its stead.\* All the feuds and the calamities within the race of the Scyldings are thus interpreted as a consequence of the time of peace being at an end. For the poet these calamities necessarily meant a continuation of this first great battle. He arranges them under one point of view by making them a part of the curse of Fenia and Menia. In doing so he is in full harmony with the popular belief which has the malediction of some offended supernatural being bring misfortune not only on the guilty person but on all his posterity for

\* Cf. the famous stanzas in the *Völuspá* in which we are told how the slaying of the woman of gold (*Gullveig*) causes "the first war in the world," followed by all the wars (the period of Othin and the Valkyries).

many generations. It is a fine poetic effect that this far-reaching curse is not uttered during the normal working of the mill, but only when it is going to pieces; no sooner is the curse spoken than the mill collapses altogether. The hearers of the Quern Song instinctively feel that this is not a part of the action but a prophetic glance into the future.

The Quern Song represents in clear outlines the heroic stage of the ancestral legends. It was preceded by the primitive myth in which the supernatural cow pierces the ruler of the Golden Age. Also the legend of the Gold Mill, primitive in its idea, but amplified by motifs from fairy tales, belongs to a stage preceding the heroic. The third stage in the evolution of the Frothi legend is that in which the pirate King Mysing figures as the slayer. This is the heroic stage, in the Scandinavian meaning of the term. In it war is predominating. Kings are the chief personages; but in point of the relation it bears to the older stages it is a rationalistic transformation into a human personage of the "mouse-grey" ox of the primitive myth. On the other hand the heroic treatment of the subject throws the wishing-mill into the shade, casting the bright light rather on the bondmaids who turn it, for the heroic interest is an interest in human beings, and the character of men is in our heroic lays felt as the subject of paramount importance. The poet of the lay himself must have created the figures of the two redoubtable giantesses. Unquestionably, in any case, he has endowed them with their fierce spirit and the might of their rising wrath. In this treatment of the theme there



is revealed a poetic atmosphere so characteristically Scandinavian that we may with full justice see in him lay a culminating point of the evolution of the ancestral hero-legends.

The characteristic feature of this evolution is the process of approximation by which mythic ancestors are made to resemble the warlike chief personages of the Scylding dynasty, who, to start with, were historical characters. Frothi residing in full peace in his castle, when an army of foemen suddenly bursts upon him, reminds one of Halfdan being surprised by his brother Frothi. And as to the burning of Frothi and all his followers in his hall, it is like the deed of Halfdan's sons when avenging the death of their father on their uncle Frothi. On the other hand the motif of the destroyer, coming up from the sea, unknown and unexpected, is not taken from the Scylding cycle but, rather, a remembrance of Haki, the brother and avenger of Hagbarth, running up from the sea to destroy King Sigar and his royal seat in Zealand. What we learn of Frothi is of precisely the same nature as what we have above learned of Scyld: the heroic evolution of the ancestor is brought about by adapting him to the central figures of the Scylding cycle.

The age of the Quern Song may be established with some degree of certainty. The first allusion to it occurs in the *Hákonarmál* composed by the Norwegian court poet Eyvind skaldaspillir about 960. He refers to gold as "the grinding of the unglad bondmaids." It must be remembered that Eyvind is a specialist in references

to the Scyldings.\* Elsewhere in the older Scaldic poetry, gold is not infrequently called "the seed of Frothi" (cf. the allusion in the Biarkamal, see p. 118); but no direct allusion to the Quern Song as such is to be found before the twelfth century, in the Icelandic making over of the Biarkamal (cf. p. 192).

The local history of its origin may presumably be sought among the western settlements of the Scandinavians. In Orkney folklore not only the Grotti mill but also Fenia and Menia occur; but this does not immediately concern the Quern Song, as the essential feature of the tale is the sea mill. The Grotti Song owes to Western civilization the idea of turbulent streams being necessary to turn water mills, and of the forces of nature rebelling against overwork. One naturally assumes that some Scandinavian in England, more especially a Norwegian poet in these lands, was the author. If so, this would tally with the result, gained in another part of our investigation, that Danes of the Viking Age brought Scylding traditions with them to England and that these Western treatments of Scandinavian themes (in prose and sometimes in poems) set their stamp on the legends which we meet with, one or two centuries later, as the Icelandic Scylding tradition.

## 2. FROTHI THE DRAGON-SLAYER (THE VIKING SAGA OF FROTHI) †

At the beginning of the second book of Saxo's History, we find an extensive story of a King Frothi the contents

\* See above p. 175 (*fræ Fyrirvalla*); p. 174 (*Laufi*); p. 175 (*Biarkamal* as the model for the *Hakonarmal*).

† The following discussion is given in greater detail in the Danish edition (*Danmarks Heltedigtning*, i, 305-310); for the historical basis of Frothi see *ibid.*, ii, 314-316.

of which are intimately connected with the (long) story of Hadding (book i). Both are evidently culled from Norn sagas, not from Danish tradition. In their restless multitude of scenes, in the frequently interspersed lyrical stanzas, in their names, in phonetics, in horizon, they show all the earmarks of those Norn romantic sagas by students called Fornaldarsögur.

The Frothi saga of Saxo begins with a romantic scene. Desirous of gold, the young king sails unaccompanied to an island and there kills a dragon as it issued from its lair to drink. In order to safeguard himself he had covered himself and his shield with the hides of oxen. After this exploit he started on numerous viking expeditions in which stratagems play a great rôle. He subjugates the king of the people of Courland, and the cities of Rotala (in Esthonia) and Paltisca (now Pleskow, in Russia). Then he subdues King Handuwan, ruler of a Russian principality; Vitti, a Frisian pirate; and finally Melbric, the king of Scotland. He saves his army in England by a stratagem, and by another he conquers London. Alongside of these conquests there occur, now and then, rebellions in his own land, stirred up by his ambitious sister Ulfhild (a personage figuring also in the Hadding saga). In order to protect himself against attempts to poison him he was accustomed to strew ground gold on his food. At last he found his death by an impenetrable coat-of-mail in which he was suffocated by his own heat.

Only one detail in this story has to do with the Frothi Peace: the ground gold which Frothi strews on his food is a trifling survival of Frothi's gold-mill. But for the

story as a whole this point is of no consequence whatever; the saga does not reveal to us whether it is merely a pale reflection of the legendary ancestor, or whether it is Frothi himself, raised to the stature of a romantic hero.

The dragon fight is the other legendary feature, and many learned speculations have been made in order to demonstrate that we have here — in a disguised form — not the beginning but the death of the ancestor-king, and that he and his deed are identical with Beowulf and his dragon fight. We shall presently return to this question.

What characterizes the saga as a whole is not its legendary aspect but the viking life depicted in it. The stratagems in which both Frothi and his “father” Hadding excel are partly identical with, partly of the same kind as, the stratagems reported of Hasting and other famous vikings (e.g., the stratagem by which London is captured is the same as that by which Hasting captured Lunaborg in Italy). The horizon is that of the Viking Age, partly a Baltic theatre of war, partly the Western lands. King “Melbricus” of Scotland is an historical personage, “Melbrigthi, Earl of the Scots,” who was slain only in the tenth century in a treacherous invasion by Sigurth, Earl of the Orkneys. Frothi himself is historical: in the ninth century the brothers Thorgisl and Frothi, so Snorri tells, “went on viking expeditions to the west. They harried Scotland, Wales, and Ireland and won Dublin first of all Norsemen. It is said that Frothi was killed by a poisonous draught, but Thorgisl was king in Dublin for a long time and

fell finally through the treachery of the Irish." Thorgisl's first incursion in Ireland was in 832; in 845 he was captured by King Mælsechlainn and drowned in a lake; the death of his brother Frothi must have occurred between these two dates.

It will thus be evident that the Frothi saga is no legendary tradition but consists of the story of his actual career as a viking ruler, mingled with other reminiscences from the Viking Age. His death by poison seems to be reflected in Ulfhild's attempts on his life, and the fate of his brother Thorgisl may possibly have suggested his death by strangulation in his own coat-of-mail. These features are told and expanded in the romantic style common to the later traditions of viking leaders in England, Iceland, and Norway.

There is no reason why we should abstract the dragon fight from this romantic development. In our Heroic traditions the dragon slayer is found only in the person of the famous Sigurth, slayer of Fafni. In the Romantic sagas the dragon slayer is a not uncommon figure at the beginning of the story. E. g., Ragnar lothbrok, the famous father of the Lothbrok sons, in Northumberland in the middle of the ninth century; Sivard digri, earl of Northumberland (died 1055);\* Ketil hæng, a hero from northernmost Norway (probably of the ninth century) who killed a flying dragon that rushed on him from the mountains. Even so historical a person as the Icelandic poet Biörn Hitdœlakappi, the Hitardal champion, is said to have slain a

\* Cf. my article on Sivard digri in "Saga-Book of the Viking Club," 1910, = *Arkiv. f. n. Fil.*, 1903.

dragon, one night, when aboard one of the ships of King Canute the Great; and the Iclander Gull-Thori acquired his riches and his surname by taking the river-dragons' gold. In the Nialssaga, dealing with events of the tenth century, one of the minor personages boasts of having slain a monster. In the Scylding cycle, Frithleif (Saxo, book vi) has a dragon fight almost identical with that of Frothi; but the Frithleif saga is a thoroughly romantic narrative, the hero's name only belonging to the old heroic stock. All these facts show that the dragon fight is not a characteristic incident of the Heroic traditions of Scandinavia but belongs, rather, to the Romantic stories developed in the Viking Age or still later. In full agreement with this fact the details of Frothi's dragon fight suggest that it is not original but copied from other sources: his armor of oxhide is borrowed from Ragnar lothbrok; the pit dug in the dragon's path is imitated from the story of Sigurth, the slayer of Fafni; the deserted island from which the hero carries the gold in his boat is that of Sigemund in Beowulf. By ways not entirely clear to us this feature of a dragon fight was taken up by the greedy imagination of the early Scandinavian Middle Ages.

Scholars are mistaken, then, when they claim Frothi's dragon fight as evidence for his existence as a legendary hero. On the contrary, the dragon slayer in the beginning of the saga is proof that we have here a stock incident of the romantic viking saga.

All that may be maintained with any degree of certainty as belonging to the legendary hero of that name is the golden seed, and also the place given him in the

genealogy as one of the earliest Scyldings, father to Halfdan, thus corresponding to the old genealogical traditions that make Skiöld and Frothi the ancestors of the Halfdan family. But the greater part of the story which is told of him is a viking saga based on historical events of the ninth century which were incorporated into the old Scylding cycle at a relatively late time. Though obtaining this high rank among the Danish kings the viking Frothi has but a small amount of materials from ancestral myths to his credit. The major part of his story is, rather, an adaptation from important legends of the Scyldings: his envious sister Ulfhild is a copy of Hrolf's sister Skuld; only, all that is told of Hrolf and Skuld is both pithy and plastic, whereas in the later story the material is amplified in a romantic way, without the saga limiting itself to a definite action.

Thus the viking saga of Frothi, poor as it is in ancient legendary material, confirms our view that it was the main action of the Scylding cycle, viz., the part dealing with Hrolf, which chiefly influenced the representation by a later period of the ancestral legends, thus creating an inner harmony in the general aspect of that dynasty.

## CHAPTER X

### THE OLDER LINE OF THE SCYLDINGS

#### 1. THE "OLDER" AND THE "YOUNGER" SCYLDINGS

**A**FTER having studied the individual legends and their individual figures we shall now cast a glance over the Hrolf group as a whole and consider its place in Danish heroic poetry.

In our various sources the legends are found ordered according to a definite chronological order, line of kings, and ancestral tree. Unfortunately, these genealogies are so mutually contradictory that scholars have given up reducing them to order. And yet the matter is simple enough, as will be seen. In the midst of the names that are ever shifting or disappearing we find two short pieces of this genealogy, each one firmly holding together like two timber rafts amidst loosely floating wreckage.

Scyld	Dan
(Peace-Frothi)	Frothi the Peaceful
Halfdan	Frithleif
Helgi and Hroar	Frothi
Hrolf	Ingiald
Hrœrek	

We understand now what binds the first row together. It constitutes a poetic whole which has acted as a support during many centuries. Lines of action, taking their inception in the lives of Halfdan and Helgi, once also of Frothi, are continued in the careers of Hrolf and



**Hroerek.** At the same time the race rises to the climax of its heroic strength in Hrolf, after ascending from Halfdan to Helgi. The two progenitors Scyld and Frothi give the first superficial indication of the nature of the line. We know now how this cycle of myths originated, know about Hrolf's fall, and understand the rôle of the Biarkamal as the poetic center and more historic kernel of the cycle, about which the lighter growth of legends grew backwards over the race, new legendary material constantly being added.

The other genealogy from Dan to Ingiald shows exactly the same characteristic. It has its own poetic center of gravity and its only great song of commemoration in Starkath's appearance in king Ingiald's palace. Ingiald's father Frothi plays a rôle similar to that of Helgi. In his reign matters take their inception which come to full fruition only in Ingiald's time. Frithleif, somewhat like Halfdan, is devoid of any real legendary material in traditions common to the North; but later separate traditions which are entirely different in Denmark and Norway-Iceland have been associated with his life. Finally, Dan and Frothi the Peaceful are legendary figures somewhat resembling the progenitors Scyld and Peace-Frothi; the one is the founder of the race or the warlike establisher of the kingdom, the other, the incarnation of the realm's peace and good fortune in remotest antiquity. To be more precise, Peace-Frothi and Frothi the Peaceful really are the same personage, whilst Scyld is the eponymous ancestor of the Scyldings and Dan, in the same manner, of the Danes and Denmark.

Thus we have in reality two Danish royal lines, each of which in itself forms a complete legendary cycle extending from remote antiquity down to the times when heroes flourished most, after which both abruptly come to an end. In order to give the full poetic effect they ought to be considered as separate from each other; the sense of unity which they produce will cease if we attempt to crowd them into one line. Each by itself is a poetic representation of Denmark's antiquity, the line of the Scyldings showing more of the warlike and heroic ideal, the line of Dan more instinct with the feeling of national solidarity and revealing a more national color.

I call these two cycles the "older" and the "younger" line. The line from Scyld to Hrolf is found already in *Beowulf* and the essential figures in it correspond to historic personages. The genealogy from Dan to Ingiald must have been formed later; for in *Beowulf* we find but weak adumbrations of its future development. The ideals of the race of the Scyldings are warlike; we saw that the *Biarkamal* rested on a broad basis of Teutonic (especially Anglo-Saxon) heroic poetry. The ideals of the descendents of Dan are more highly developed, showing a conception of nationality, administration of justice, civilization, education — which argues a later origin. The very names Scyld and Scyldings have a larger national significance only in the oldest poetry (*Beowulf*); whereas Dan and Denmark correspond to a later empire, to the realm of Denmark in its full extent during the Viking Period.

Evidently the Danes twice formed a national cycle of legends. At some time or another during the Viking

Age the old one was not continued but a new one formed. I shall not here investigate why this was done, but rest satisfied with recalling only one of my earlier observations, viz., that only the older group with Hrolf is in any way closely associated with the royal castle of Leire, whilst the "younger" line favors entirely different localities.

### 3. THE GENESIS OF THE LIST OF KINGS

In *Beowulf* and the *Quern Song* the shorter list of Kings (comprising the cycle of poetic legends) is seen to exist by itself. No lay of the Viking Age presupposes any other connection. In the prose sagas of the Middle Ages, however, we invariably find a long list of kings in which both the older and the younger cycle of legends, together with still other legendary material or individual figures, are enumerated one after another as one long succession of rulers.

The creation of such a common list of kings became a necessity as soon as the two cycles were fully elaborated, presenting a certain air of true history. That being the case, the Danes could not have two different legendary histories, each in its way giving an account of the rise of the kingdom and its rulers.

From the above investigations we have learned to understand a part of the influence exerted by this long line on the legendary material. We have seen how the two kings Frothi contest each other's right to the Frothi Peace, and how now the one, now the other is degraded to a typical ruler of the olden times. We also know that a number of Danish traditions advance Dan as the

progenitor of the entire line, rather than Scyld. On the Hrolf group the genealogy had no deep effect. Greater was the influence on the deedless progenitors who came to stand amidst figures rich in legendary lore. About them there grew up entirely new motifs as, for instance, Saxo's large Frothi saga in his fifth book. But all the motifs common to the North had been in existence before that time, for which reason it is an easy matter to distinguish these new formations.

I have said that the long line of kings is old: it became a necessity so soon as the power to create new epic episodes was exhausted and the two cycles stood there each as a fragment of the ancient history of the realm. At first blush there may not seem to be much to support this theory. In all the genealogies that have come down to us, the discrepancies seem the most prominent characteristic. But the more scholars study the matter, the more traces are discovered of an old grouping of the legendary material, even if in the sources that have come down to us this is seen only in a fragmentary way. In most genealogies, e.g., one finds Hroerek as the successor to Hrolf kraki. This arrangement can not be due to the youngest legendary tradition; for there these two rulers are kept apart. In somewhat older traditions common to all the North we are told that Helgi slays Hroerek — consequently he cannot be made Hrolf's successor. We must go back to the very earliest forms of these legends, to Beowulf and the Biarkamal, to find Hrolf and Hroerek mentioned together. For that matter, the genealogy makes the mistake of having Hroerek survive Hrolf. Still it evidently is based on a

genealogically sound tradition: Hroerek is the youngest member of the Scyldings during the period of Hrolf kraki. In drawing up a family tree he is therefore mentioned last. The genealogical table does, then, preserve a reflection of the oldest form of the legend, older than the prose stories which were told to glorify the war-like Helgi, and which inserted the death of Hroerek among his deeds.

I shall not dwell on other features of a similar nature. I shall only stress the main point, which is that the Danish and the Icelandic lists of kings are in reality the same. In the Danish tradition we find the simple state of affairs of one cycle being merely made fast to the next; first we have the line from Scyld to Hrolf and Hroerek; then Vermund and Uffe with their border warfare; then the entire younger line of Scyldings from Dan and Frothi the Peaceful to Ingiald; then a wavering line which the tradition of each district fills out as best it can with its unconnected legendary material; and finally Harold Wartooth as conclusion of the line. The clever Icelandic historians differ from this scheme by having interwoven the younger into the older line. They had, indeed, made an observation which does credit to their historical sense: that the king Ingiald of the Hrolf tradition and the one of the Starkath poems is at bottom the same person. The fact that this is entirely irreconcilable with the poetic conception of the older sources could not, of course, concern them. By this means they managed to interlace the two lines. In all other respects the principal scheme is the same as in the Danish monuments: first Scyld with Peace-Frothi; then the line to

Dan, with Vermund intermediate; then the line from Frothi the Peaceful to Ingiald, and finally, after a mass of loose legendary material, Harold Wartooth.

Thus the list of kings proves to be an original and old tradition, a shadowy image, as it were, of the ancient development of the hero legends—a source which, consulted alone, will only lead one into confusion, but which, coördinated discreetly with other and more certain fixed points, may give us a considerable amount of new useful information.

## CONCLUSION

### 1. THE HOME OF THE HROLF CYCLE

**A**FTER having now examined the entire legendary material we must cast a critical and unifying glance at the results won. Have we really been able to scan the development of the entire Hrolf cycle? Are the versions we have to deal with constructed on such simple lines, by means of change and elaboration of the traditions of the immediately preceding generation? Are the two groups of legends we make out as "Danish" and "Norn" expressive of the development of the entire Hrolf cycle; or are there, perchance, unknown special forms and cross influences whose power for change we may suspect but hardly calculate?

Let us examine the geographic possibilities for developments other than we know.

The Scylding legends existed in England as well as in the North. But the Anglo-Saxon tradition is a distinct, and very old, lateral shoot of conspicuous individuality; witness the preponderance of the Hroerek motif, the appearance of the figures of Unferth and Wealhtheow, and the entrance of Beow and Beowulf into the story. There is not the slightest reason for believing that this tradition ever was amalgamated with the later Scandinavian legends. Moreover there is a likelihood that the Scylding legends died out in England very soon after having contributed to the material of

Beowulf. There is no Anglo-Saxon with a name occurring among the race of Halfdan.\*

Within Scandinavian territory, Sweden seems not to have harbored the Hrolf legends at all. No testimony of their existence is found, nor is it to be expected that the Biarkamal, or Hrolf's expedition to Upsala, were favorite topics among Swedish audiences. Neither are there in the tradition any features which might have originated in Sweden. To be sure, Svipdag is the representative of Sweden, by the side of "the Norwegian" Biarki and "the Dane" Hialti; but his experiences in the Swedish court are by no means an expression of Swedish national feeling. They are, rather, a Norwegian saga-teller's imitation of the old motifs of the Hrolf cycle. The only Swedish material is the fight of Ali and Athisl; but this was certainly not used in Sweden as a detail among the great deeds of the warriors of Hrolf. Most likely, Norwegian saga-tellers have connected it with the cycle.

The case may be different with the Scandinavians who during the Viking Age settled in the Western lands. We will remember the great number of Danes, mixed with Norwegians, who settled in North England. Norwegians, too, lived round about on the Scotch islands and in Ireland, here and there mixed with Danes and Swedes; and at the court of Canute the Great were assembled not only Danes but also Norwegians and Icelanders. Here, then, is a large territory where the Scylding legends may have developed in a different way. At any rate, it is to be supposed that the Danes did not remain

\* Cf. Bins, *Paul und Braune, Beiträge*, xx, 175 f.



unacquainted with them. Decidedly, this is a region which has to be taken into account in any investigation of the history of the Scylding legends. On the other hand, the national stock of stories must have been, on the whole, the same as that already known; that is, Danish legends with their predilection for simplicity and expressiveness, and Norwegian stories with their inclination to be fantastic and artfully interwoven.

Let us, then, collect the various testimonies from the Western Isles; first such from the Norwegian colonies, then also from the settlements in England.

The first mention of Svipdag is found in the Orkneys, shortly before 1150. The same poem contains also encomiums of Helgi, Hrolf, and other Scyldings, and sets these Danish kings in a place of honor directly after the Volsungs. A somewhat later lay from the Orkneys mentions Biarki as first among all the warriors of the olden times.\* On the Orkneys there is localized the quern legend, from the early Middle Ages down to our own time. The Quern Song was known there and seems itself to have originated through contact with Western civilization. Helgi's adventure with the elfin woman is modelled after a Scottish hero legend from the Ossianic cycle. The transformation by an evil stepmother in the Biarki story has its closest relative (or, perhaps, offshoot) in a Faroese ballad. Its fundamental motif, however, is taken from the stories about the Northum-

\* *Málsháttakveði* or *Fornyrðisdrápa*, stanza 7 (F. Jónsson, *den norsk-isl. skjaldedigtning*, ii, B, 159). There has been debate as to whether the Orkney bishop Bjarni († 1222) is the author. Some have expressed doubts concerning its Orkney provenience, one investigator even concerning its age. (See *Aarbøger*, 1890, pp. 253-256 with reference to previous literature.)

brian Earl Sivarth hinn digri; but this borrowing was certainly not made in Northumberland, where the earl's story was long remembered, but rather in other regions which had some connection with the Scandinavians in England. It is to be mentioned, lastly, that in the *Hrolfssaga* the horizon of the stories has been shifted toward the West, Hroar being made king of Northumberland, whilst his brother Helgi rules over Denmark.\*

From all this it follows that the Hrolf cycle was well known in the Western Isles. The legendary materials and the horizon of these regions influenced even the tradition which is found in the Icelandic versions. Of the texts extant, the *Hrolfssaga* corresponds most closely to the traditions of the West, with the only difference that it places Hroar in Northumberland. Only this version has taken up the Ossianic story about the fairy woman which occurs on the coasts of Scotland. On the other hand it abstains from the genealogical constructions of the historians, the *fróðir menn*, and — like the Orkney poem — makes Svipdag, not Hvitserk, one of its great heroes.

When we take into consideration that the Western Isles performed this service for the preservation and growth of the Scylding legends, our next question will be: in what relation does this cycle stand to Norway? In the times about the battle of Stiklastad the Biarkamal was quite well known there just as it, in later times,

\* In general, Northumberland is mentioned in the Icelandic Scylding traditions as part of the Danish empire (cf. end of the *Sögubrot*, *Fas.*, l. 388; *Hervararsaga*, last chapter). This is not the case in Danish tradition, nor in Saxo's Norwegian coast sagas. Still in no other source is it mentioned so plainly as the scene of the chief fates of the house of the Scyldings as here.

furnished the model for the Starkath poems. Biarki was also (in southern Norway, before 1066) conceived to be a Norwegian warrior. In the history about Biarki's bearish nature there are a remarkable number of similarities to Norwegian popular tradition; without the Norwegians' interest in the bear as a fairy-story character, and in transformations of human beings into bears, these stories would probably never have arisen. Finally, also the battle on the ice of the Vener Lake, as well as other legends about the Ynglings, must have passed through Norwegian tradition. But all these evidences gather only about the berserkers, or, rather, about Biarki. There is no trace of any connected Scylding story. To be sure, Eyvind skaldaspillir was acquainted with the Quern Song; but we lack entirely any later tradition about its existence or other related local legends. Saxo's legends from Western Norway cast a strange light on conditions. A fragment of tradition about Frothi's gold quern was used in the making up of a viking saga which precisely bears witness that the Quern Song in its entirety was not known. A large part of Helgi's career is used to fill out a fairy story-like saga about Halfdan the Mountain-strong.\* A Helgi saga cannot have been known to the same audience, as the stories would have been too much on the same lines. The Hrolfssaga itself, finally, is not seen at all among the Norwegian parts of Saxo's work. In case Saxo did know the legend at all, he probably laid it aside as too fantastic on account of the bear story. Most weight is laid on the fact that the connected story of Helgi's and

\* Cf. about this figure *Danmarks Heltedigtning*, iii (forthcoming), last part.

Hrolf's life, showing the tragic fate of the family, that is, the story which we have, so far, called "the Norn story" — is lacking altogether among Saxo's coast sagas and that it seems never to have been well known and widely spread in Norway. The Norn form of the Scylding legends means, therefore, that form in which they were known on the Western Isles and in Iceland, and of which some few touches or isolated features found their way into Norwegian tradition.

This is true of the older line of the Scyldings, the Hrolf cycle. In the younger line — the cycles of Erik malspaki and of Starkath — the case is exactly the reverse; here the legendary material has grown with an astonishing luxuriance in the west and south Norwegian sagas (Saxo's 5th to 8th book), in Iceland and the Western Isles, however, but little.

The center of the real Hrolfssaga is therefore to be sought on the other side of the North Sea. Iceland and the Orkneys are our main sources there, Iceland being the more receptive, the Western Isles the more productive, region. Shall we, then, perhaps, seek there the origins of the Norn form of the Hrolf cycle? Did there, perchance, exist the creative power and the interest to picture the kings of the Danes as the most splendid among the heroes of the North?

Before answering, we must examine a question that has some bearing on the problem, the rôle of the Hrolf stories among the Scandinavians in England. To be sure, our sources here are exceedingly scarce. On some points we must form conclusions by judging from the general condition of the times. It was in northern Eng-

land that we found a *Boduvar Berki* (p. 256), which seems the earliest evidence of the Biarki (*\*bǫðear-Biarki*?) of the old lays having become the Norn *Bǫðearr biarki*.\* Points of contact were found with events in England in Hialti's farewell to his leman, and the attack on the royal castle (p. 228 f.). Still more remarkable was the similarity between Hrolf's visit to Athial and the Celtic mabinogi about Branwen's, the British king's, visit to the Irish king's castle (p. 360). It would seem, indeed, as if either a Welshman learned to know the Hrolf sagas in their fuller Norn form, or else — and I think this far more likely — that some Scandinavian story-teller listened to British mabinogi and used this new material in order to give his native hero legends a broader and more novelistic character. If this is the case, England must have taken an important part in the development of the Norn Hrolf legends.†

On the very face of things, North England seems more adapted to such a rôle than any other region possibly could be. Here we have the strongest mixture of Danish and Norwegian elements. Founded, in the main, by Danish colonists (about 870), the Northumbrian kingdom stands in a particularly close relation to the Norwegians in Dublin, and for some time had a native Norwegian (Eric Bloody-axe) as ruler. In the hero legends of Northumberland it is easy to recognize a distinctive Norn element. The chief testimony in this regard is furnished by the legends about Sivard hinn

\* Frothi, of the Helgi-Hroar story, was borrowed in the North England story of Waldef (311), and the whole plot of this episode is connected with the Cymric-Scandinavian sagas, especially with the story of Meriadoc.

† *Saga-Book of the Viking Club*, 1910, pp. 1-16.

digri, the strong Northumbrian earl whose life, very soon after his death (1055), was transformed into a romantic saga. I shall quote my words about him written in a different connection: "Like the Ragnarsaga, it presents a curious literary problem. It deals with a Danish warrior and was told in a region where Danish colonists were certainly more numerous than Norwegians. Nevertheless it differs from the fundamental character of the entire body of Danish tradition such as we know it from Saxo and his contemporaries. The tendency to bring about a connection between the various events is greater here; also, there is a predilection for supernatural elements which is without parallel in Danish lore. There must here be influence from the Norwegians who settled in Northumbria and thus contributed in enriching and developing the saga."\*

We understand now why the testimony pointed toward the Norn form of the Hrolf legends as the one which was known in England. This tradition is undoubtedly not one which immigrated and pushed aside older and purely Danish legends about Hrolf, but the Norn form is native here. The Hrolfssaga, just like the story of Sivard hinn digri, is a story about Danish heroes, and with Danish motifs as component elements; but in the handling of this material we see evidences of that skill for weaving together, and that leaning toward the supernatural, which we, for a slightly later period, consider as characteristic of Norwegian-Icelandic saga-style. The Danes brought to England these traditions and the enthusiasm for Hrolf as embodying the

\* *Ark. f. n. F.*, 1903, p. 213.

royal ideal. Moreover, the Danish power which, about 1000, raised itself to the dominion of all England and occupied a leading position in the North needed just such a royal ideal; and the growing importance in the story of the twelve warriors of Hrolf points to contact with the real associations of warriors. Norwegian motifs are to be seen, on the other hand, in the Othin episodes and probably still other saga scenes. Celtic narrative poetry no doubt contributed to cultivate the taste of the Scandinavians for the epic breadth of the hero saga; possibly, we may see definite Welsh influence in the expedition to Upsala.

To be sure, it is rather a guess to seek the origin of the Norn legends of Hrolf in England. But, really, we have but two possibilities: either the scattered Norwegian colonies; or else the compact settlements in England of Danes or Dano-Norwegians. All indications discourage the theory of considering the small Western Isles as the home of the legends: their situation on the outer limits of Scandinavian influence, their lack of national interest in the legend of Hrolf; finally even the fact that the only legendary motif which these regions can claim as their own, the Scottish story about the elfin woman, does not belong to the main stock, but is a later addition. The somewhat meagre external evidence and the important inner evidence furnished by the literary situation points rather to the Scandinavians in England as the authors of the connected legendary treatment of the lives of Helgi and Hrolf.

As compared with the Danish stories in Saxo, this Hrolfssaga shows an undeniably Norn physiognomy.

But if we contrast it with the Norwegian coast sagas in Saxo, or only with the Bøthvar episode, or with Helgi's encounter with the elfin woman, we notice at once how moderate a use it makes of fantastic features. Of supernatural beings there is, as in the Sivarth legend, only Othin. The noblest feature in the Norn tradition, Hrolf's leaping over the fire, is at bottom not at all saga-like but rather in the style of the popular legend, showing — in its greatest development — the same clear, sudden action encountered also in the quick deeds of Hialti and Viggi. And then the scenery! The forest-covered island on which the sons of Halfdan seek shelter in nowise suggests the bleak cliffs of Norway, Iceland, or the Orkneys, but seems genuinely Danish and true to the times when most of the small islands of the Danish archipelago were covered with virgin forests. And does not also the hollow oak which, in another version, provides shelter for the king's sons give the impression that the legend has not yet entirely detached itself from the original setting of the rich lands of the plain?

It is a different matter with the Biarki story, i.e., all which is connected with Biarki's Norwegian origin and his bear nature. All this is fantastic enough, from beginning to end. The spiritual presuppositions of this story are to be found in Norwegian national feeling and in the Norwegian predilection for bear stories. Many features of the legends as well as the earliest witnesses point to Norway as the original home of the Biarki stories. They represent an independent attempt to collect the legends of the Hrolf cycle into a poetic whole,



Biarki and his brothers' adventures being made the skeleton of the narrative. It is then a saga structure, parallel to, but independent of, the Helgi saga and the Hrolf saga. Its independent character comes out clearly in occasional conflicts with the real stories of the Scyldings, as when the revenge for Biarki's fall comes near crowding out that for Hrolf himself. The pre-supposition for these stories is furnished by the Biarkamal and the legends clinging to it, whereas the sagas of Helgi and of Hrolf are based on older traditions about the tragic fate of the family of the Scyldings which antedate even the Biarkamal (Halfdan and Frothi, Helgi and Yrsa), so that the old lay is to be considered the chief, but not the only, source for them. The bear story has, on the other hand, quite consistently elaborated the description of the lives of the warriors to which the Biarkamal forms the introduction.

But these two saga structures, the one centering about Biarki and the other about Hrolf, have in later times accommodated themselves one to the other, as seen in Icelandic tradition and stories from the Western Isles, so that the story of Biarki is incorporated into a larger, novel-like Hrolfssaga as a *páttir* (episode); for the sake of symmetry a similar story about Svipdag is added, and the portion about Biarki thus counterbalanced, in order that the huge warrior shall not absorb all the interest.

These, then, are the different influences which give the legends about Hrolf their form before they were finally written down in Iceland: a main stock of Scylding legends which cross over from Denmark to England

and the Western Isles; and a Biarki story, originating, probably, a little later in the same country, which received its final form in Norway and then met the Scylding legends in the Western Isles.

Corroboration for the theory that the place of origin of the Norn Scylding cycle is to be sought in Western lands is offered in the Quern Song, which was composed by some Norwegian-born poet (scarcely later than 950), but also shows traces of Western civilization (the mills), and is associated in all later times with the Western Isles, not with Norway.

The Western colonies of the Scandinavians served evidently, not only as a gate for the importation of new impulses, but also as an intermediary in bringing the Scandinavian peoples into closer contact with one another and thus perfecting their native culture. The older cycle of the Scyldings is the most glorious fruit of this common labor; and the Icelanders gauged this intellectual effort at its true value in calling Hrolf "the most excellent of all the kings of antiquity."

Denmark alone did not share in this later and more splendid flowering of the Scylding legends. There, the simpler but intense hero legends persisted, as the one of Hrolf and his fortitude when sitting still during his fiery ordeal. There, we find a characteristic narrative style, with a vivid feeling for everyday life which the later, Norn, or rather, Pan-Scandinavian, cycle about Hrolf was not able to obscure, a national character all its own which Danish poetry carries over into the Middle Ages.

## 2. A RETROSPECT

The results gained from our entire investigation may be summarized now. The reader will himself know what is directly stated in the sources and what has been gained by comparatively certain proofs or by more debatable inferences.

1. *The Historic Basis* (about 450-550). The starting point for the Hrolf stories is given by the real experiences of the Danes during the period of the Migration of Nations, especially the memorable association of external splendor and victories (the struggle against the Heathobards), and the tragic occurrences in their royal house. At this time the Danes appear as a great nation built up by the union of the petty states of an earlier period and embracing a considerable domain. A center in this Danish realm is Leire in Zealand, whose royal palace is famous, both for the splendid court kept there and for the powerful troop of warriors (Scyldings, i.e., 'shield men,' understood in later times as descendants of Scyld) there assembled about the ruler. Of the royal race we know the names and essential history of Halfdan, Hroar, and Hrolf. For a long time a struggle is carried on against a foreign race, the Heathobards or "Vikings" who are by most scholars assumed to have dwelt in the southwestern corner of the Baltic. We know only a few isolated episodes of this war, the attempt at making peace between the nations by Hroar's daughter marrying King Ingiald, and a later battle during which Ingiald's strong son Agnar succumbed to Biarki, one of the Danish warriors. It is probably also historic that

Biarki received King Hrolf's sister in marriage. Possibly this combat brought to an end the war with the Heathobards. Apart from this struggle, the Danes have some lighter engagements with the Swedes: Hroar's sister is married to King Ali (?), after whose fall Hrolf makes war on his brother's son and slayer Athisl. Far more salient, however, are the events within the family of the Scyldings: Hrolf, the son of the short-lived Helgi and his stranger wife Yrsa, becomes the leader of the Danes in war, and after Hroar's death drives his son Hroerék from the throne and probably slays him, but falls himself afterwards by the incursion of a kinsman, Hiarvarth, who usurps the throne. He also seems to have been killed soon after, at any rate his descendants certainly did not sit on the throne of Denmark. With Hrolf's fall the events of which we are informed come to an end and Denmark's subsequent history is again enveloped in obscurity.

2. *The Oldest Heroic Poetry* (sixth century). By making inferences on the basis of the earlier English and later Scandinavian heroic poetry we are able to reconstruct a fundamental form of the legend which is common to both nations. No feature in it would seem to point to a purely poetic formation of legends, but rather to a selection from the events of real history. In certain cases these were great deeds of national importance (Biarki's exploits); more frequently, strongly dramatic episodes, as Ingiald's bloody marriage feast, the breach of faith between Hrolf and Hroerek, and Hrolf's fall. The poetic form was the lay, not the narrative poem, as is evident from the fact that in the case of Ingiald's mar-

riage the speech containing the exhortation, and not the course and consequences of the conflict, was from the very beginning the main object. All this corresponds to the inclination of the Teutonic people of that period to re-create history in song. At the same time, or perhaps even earlier, the historic figures are made to resemble the more mythical heroic poetry, the progenitor Scyld being invested with the legendary motif of the hero coming from a divine home.

3. *English Poetry* (seventh to eighth centuries). On the basis of lays of the period immediately following, epics are developed which, both in Denmark and in England, make the fight for the throne the main tragic theme. In England, the interest centers about the beginning of the feud, the enormity perpetrated by Hrolf who, though his uncle's friend and companion in arms, was capable of deposing Hroar's son and ascending the throne himself. To explain this deed, an evil counsellor was invented, in the general manner of the heroic legends. This is Unferth who, driven by envy, sows discord between the kinsmen; to offset him the mild and wise figure of queen Wealhtheow is created. Besides, the epic has an abundance of other episodes which had been handed down from the earlier lays. It knows of Danish kings in still earlier times (Heremod, Sigehere, Alevih); but a special Scylding cycle soon centering about the glories of Leire castle is about to separate from the rest. At the same time the mythical parts of the Scylding legend are elaborated. Beowulf, the slayer of trolls, is associated with the progenitor Scyld, and behind these well individualized heroes is

seen dimly the figure of Scaef, the ancestor of the race. Thus there are already evident the outlines of a consistent whole from which the great epic is about to arise. Scyldings and Geats are brought into contact with one another, and over both wings of the legendary structure the figure of Beowulf the Geat looms up like a gigantic tower.

4. *Danish Poetry* (seventh to eighth centuries). Between the lays of the sixth century and the *Biarkamal* there are intermediate Danish poems whose main contents are clear, but whose details are discernible only in part. In them the figure of Hrolf advances to the foreground. His fall at Leire becomes, even more than previously, the great event of the heroic life. Of the historic material handed down, especially those happenings which are associated with Hrolf are remembered, such as his driving Hrcerek from the throne, Biarki's fight against the Heathobards, and the expedition to Upsala. The other episodes are either forgotten or slip out of the stories about the Scyldings; thus the speech of exhortation addressed to Ingiald becomes in later times the starting point for an entirely new cycle of legends (Starkath the Old and the younger Scylding cycle). Of the race of Halfdan only a few names are remembered (Halfdan, Hroar, Helgi, Yrsa). It is remembered also, that Frothi, originally a king of the Heathobards, succumbs to Halfdan. The old national war is resolved into disconnected episodes, and the fight for the throne inside the family of Halfdan — the other great motif which caused it to be remembered — has lost a great deal of its intensity. But side

by side with this wilting away of historic motifs a poetic rejuvenation takes place: the figure of Skuld emerges as the evil counsellor and is made Hrolf's sister. The legend has Hrolf born as the fruit of the love of father and daughter, which results in a highest unfolding of the strength of the race, but also in its ruin. While the old tragic implications of his fights against Hroerek and Hiarvarth are losing much of their force, these new and stronger themes of treachery and perdition inside the family send forth strong shoots. Hrolf's fall through his sister's treachery reminds one most of Krimhild in the German Nibelung legend; Yrsa's incest recalls the birth of Sinfjotli. But it is uncertain in how far we may regard this a matter of prototypes aside from the chance of it being a borrowing. The important fact is that the great tragic ideas of heroic poetry are seen actively shaping the legendary material in conformity with themselves. At the same time the fates of the Scyldings are rounded out into a fuller cycle of legends: in Scyld was found, from the very first, the warlike progenitor of the race, of whose coming, and final departure, in a ship the Danish lays had sung; and now also the legend about the Frothi Peace — a loosely drifting myth of the Golden Age which attaches itself now here now there — is referred to the Scylding family. This legend likewise partakes of the nature of the fairy story, the gold quern being the source of the wealth and happiness of its possessor. Thus we have the royal figures of war and of peace as precursors of Hrolf's greatness.

5. *The Biarkamal* (about 900) completes the development of the cycle. In it, Hrolf's noble figure transfigures all events; the last vestiges of motifs dealing with the tragic inner fate of the family are swept away by the poet's admiration for his generosity. There is, too, this new feature, that Biarki and the life of the housecarls advance to the foreground. Biarki's great feat undoubtedly represents an historic reminiscence from the days of the ancient wars with the Heathobards. The legendary development has gone one step farther in letting Biarki lie in a magic sleep the while Hrolf is slain.\* The poet himself scarcely added any new elements excepting to assign to Biarki his place by the body of his lord. But the interest in the warriors' life is new. Hrolf half disappears in this new light, while the characteristic figure of Biarki is illuminated from all sides. A new figure is created in Hialti, and the life of the housecarls plays a rôle in the poetic elaboration of the situation as it does in no other heroic lay.

6. *Danish legends later than the Biarkamal* (tenth century or perhaps later) continue on the road on which the *Biarkamal* had entered. The circle of warriors is placed still more in the foreground, the daily life in the palace provides the color for the legend, whilst supernatural elements are barred out more strictly than before. The characteristic features of the times are most clearly seen in the new legends about Hialti, the throwing of bones at him in the hall, his drinking the blood

\* Evidently with the epic justification that it was not thinkable that the hero king could succumb if he had the greatest of all warriors as his protection (cf. above p. 89). Cf. also that Starkath is lured away from Leire before Sverting undertakes his attack on Frothi (*Arngrim*, c. ix).



of the slain monster, and his farewell to his leman. In the story about Viggi appear the distribution of gifts and the swearing of the oath of loyalty. Legends arise about Biarki's single combats in the hall; finally, new themes arise in the stories about Hrolf and Athisl, such as the choice of accomplishments and Hrolf's test of endurance before the fire. A whole world of legends throngs forth to fill in the suggestions of the Biarkamal, or to render its conceptions still more complete. Likewise there arose a legend about the envy of Hroerek and his attack on peaceful King Hroar, as an elaboration of the Hroerek story in the Biarkamal, and only later is Helgi made the avenger of his brother's death. But few minor legends are grouped around the Biarkamal outside of this cycle; thus there arise the stories of Helgi's marriage to his own daughter and Halfdan's killing of his brother Frothi. Also the legend about the progenitor of the race receives a new form, the heroic strength of the family revealing itself, not in any supernatural way, but in Scyld's shackling the bear. On the other hand, Frothi's gold quern is relegated to the world of fairy tales as no longer fitting the heroic legend. This, then, is the legendary material which still flourished in the twelfth century, when Saxo was writing his chronicle, but which dates certainly from a far earlier time, since its effects on the following Norn phase of the legends is very clear. In its style this Danish collection of myths is characterized by its interest in the events of everyday life, its avoidance of the supernatural, and its energetic, though disconnected, episodes — all of which are traits explicable as due to the Biarkamal

being felt to constitute the central feature of the entire cycle.

7. *The Norn Scylding legends* (tenth and eleventh centuries). The Norn skalds and saga tellers assimilate the legendary material contained in the *Biarkamal* and the Danish legends of the tenth century, recasting them with a strong infusion of supernatural elements and altering them in a general striving for closer connection of the various motifs and for more detail. In this respect the transformation of the legendary material into the saga form is of great importance. The legend about Scyld fades to a mere knowledge of his being the progenitor of the race. The story of Frothi and his gold quern receives its classic form in the Quern Song (about 950) in which we learn how the inordinate demands the king makes on the giant maidens result in his own ruin and a curse on his family. The Halfdan group of legends is made into a continuous saga, with Helgi as its chief personage in the first part and Hrolf in the second: (1) the pursued king's sons and their revenge for their father, developed from a stage (in the Quern Song) where Frothi is the slayer and Hrolf the avenger; (2) Helgi by a ruse overcomes Queen Oluf (a new introduction to the Yrsa legend); (3) Hroar's fall and Helgi's revenge on Hroerek (essentially like the Danish tradition); (4) Hrolf as warlike monarch with sword, hawk, and dog, and followed by twelve berserkers; (5) Agnar Ingialdsson tries to regain his father's kingdom (cf. no. 3), fetches the ring from the depths of the sea (suggested by the name of *Hrærekr slongvanbaugi*), and is slain in battle by Biarki (from the *Biarkamal*);

(6) the berserkers help Athisl in the battle on the ice of Lake Vener (from the Yngling legends; but cf. what is said below about the Biarki legend); (7) Othin gives advice to Hrolf on his expedition to Upsala; Hrolf refuses his gifts (suggested by the Othin episode of the Biarkamal); (8) Athisl's attempt to overcome Hrolf and his warriors (from a Welsh hero legend?); (9) The jumping over the fire (from the test of fortitude in Danish legends); (10) Skuld's magic.

Two parts of this composite saga give it high rank as a piece of literature, the revenge of the two young princes which forms a splendid introduction to the great history of the whole family, and the elaborate narrative of the expedition to Upsala. This latter allows all of the characteristic traits of Hrolf and his berserkers to be brought out with a wealth of picturesque detail, brings a number of the persons of the saga in contact with each other, and introduces the king's relations to Othin, first in escaping the dangers awaiting him at the court of Athisl, thanks to the god's counsel; then in preparing his own ruin by refusing Othin's gifts. It is remarkable to see how the many new scenes of this saga are not borrowed from foreign sources but born as it were from out of the legend itself. The epic is still in a flourishing condition. Influences from other sources are confined to the Amlethsaga, which lent some touches to the revenge of Helgi and Hroar for their father; whereas the connection with the Welsh mabinogi is by no means firmly established. This Norn form of the Scylding legends flourishes in all the Scandinavian colonies in the West. Its origin is to be sought in those regions where

Danes and Norwegians dwelt together and finally amalgamated; that is, most likely in Northern England. Later, it thrives best in the Western Isles. It was probably in these regions that the cycle was enriched with Helgi's adventure with the elfin woman, which is borrowed from a Gaelic hero legend but serves here, in Northern style, as a link in the tragic fates of the royal family.

8. *The Norwegian saga of Biarki* (eleventh and twelfth centuries) treats of Biarki's life before he enters the services of Hrolf. Its presuppositions are to be seen in the Danish hero legends about Biarki and Hialti. The saga is on the way to form a connected whole with Biarki, instead of the king, as central personage. Biarki is here conceived as a Norwegian (before 1066); he fights in the guise of a bear (date of this feature uncertain); he is the son of Bera and a bear (trait borrowed from the story about Sivard digri, some time after 1055); the bear story is enlarged by the introduction of two other sons, likewise showing the marks of their bearish nature, who in the end take revenge for Biarki's fall; and a story about a stepmother's magic is introduced; Biarki's father, the bear, is in reality a king's son. But this Biarki saga does not exist by itself. It is only found connected, in a more or less happy way, with the Hrolfs-saga of the Western Isles. Very likely, still another fragment of an ancient legend originally belonged to this cycle of hero legends, viz., Athisl's battle on the ice of Lake Vener.

9. *The Sripdagsaga of the Western Isles* (about 1148). At the same time that the large saga of Biarki was

incorporated into the *Hrólfs saga*, a story about three Swedish brothers was invented as a counterpart, with the narrative of Svipdag at the Swedish court, defending himself against the machinations of Athialf and the violence of his berserkers. About 1150 the *Biarknarr* also underwent changes, the list of warriors being added to it.

10. *The Norwegian Frothi Legend* (eleventh and twelfth centuries). It is a characteristically Norwegian feature that the Scylding legends are drawn into the martial and fantastic heroic tales when these flourished in the early Middle Ages (the *Fornaldarsagas*, in the narrower meaning of the term). This was of the greatest influence on the "younger" list of Scyldings; the "older" line felt this to a much slighter degree. A new group of legends was formed to stand at the head of the Scylding traditions by connecting three stories about Gram, Hadding, and Frothi. Of these, only the Frothi story concerns the Scyldings, touching, as it does, on the legend of the gold quern. It imitated one of the chief motifs of the *Hrólfs saga*, the treachery of the hero's sister. It also borrowed viking motifs from actual history and from the *Haddingssaga*. In the saga of Halfdan the Mountain-strong, the first part of the *Helgisaga* is ascribed to the legendary figure of the club-wielding Halfdan. This specially Norwegian development did not exert any influence on other Scandinavian regions.

11. *The Icelandic Version of the Scylding Legends* (until the thirteenth century). Without exactly adding new motifs the Icelandic historians (*fróðir menn*) endeavor to work together the older accounts, not into a poetic

whole, but into a historically probable narrative in which all persons are arranged in a comprehensive genealogy and in which the political motifs are evident and connected. Still, the Hrolf group remains essentially unaltered, whereas the Helgisaga is completely changed, especially by Ingiald (who long ago had parted company with the Helgisaga and formed the nucleus of another group of legends, the Starkath cycle) being shoved back into his original position. This entire change is seen in the *Skiöldungasaga* (about 1200) and its later descendant (about 1259), and reached its highest perfection in written literature. But the essential features arose already in oral tradition (as is evident from the *Langfeðgatal*); and in general it seems a direct continuation of the Norn saga tradition existing in the eleventh century, lacking however its poetic receptiveness and creative ability. Among the Icelandic sources the Hrolfssaga is altogether innocent of learned historic combinations, merely showing the old *Skiöldungasaga* with younger fairy story-like hero legends added.



## APPENDIX





## APPENDIX

### SCANDINAVIAN SOURCES FOR THE SCYLDING LEGENDS

ANCIENT LAYS I. The Hrolf group: *Biarkamál* (see p. 99 f., where Saxo's Latin text and the Hrolfssaga excerpts are printed on parallel pages; the Icelandic fragments are printed in F. Jónsson's *Skjaldedigtning*, B i, p. 170; *Grottasöngur* (in editions of the Older Edda).

II. The Starkath Lays (A. Olrik, *D(anmarks) H(eltedigtning)*, ii, 1910): *The Lay of Ingiald* and the Danish *Lay of Helgi*, tenth century (Saxo, Book VI). The *Brávalla Lay*, by some Norwegian from Telemarken, about the year 1066 [*Arkiv (för Nordisk Filologi)*, x, 223–287 (and soon more fully in *DH*, iii, forthcoming); cf. S. Bugge, *Norsk sagafortælling*, 78–160, 1908]. The *Death Lay*, from Telemarken, after 1066. The *Lay of Youth*. The *Víkarsböl* (of the *Gautrekssaga*, ed. Ranisch, 13–33, 1900; Jónsson, *Skjaldedigtning*; *DH*, ii, 317–322).

DANISH TRADITION (cf. A. Olrik (*Kilderne til*) *Saksnes oldhistorie*, i, ii, 1892–94): *The Chronicle of the Leire Kings*, written in Roskilde, about 1160–70 [*Scriptores Rerum Danicarum* (SRD), i, 223–227, translated by Jørgen Olrik in *Krøniker fra Valdemarstiden*, 1–22, 1910; cf. *Saksnes oldhistorie*, i, 98; *Dansk Historisk Tidsskrift*, seventh series, ii, 222 ff.]

I. *Sven Aggison's History of Denmark*, written shortly after 1185; [SRD, i, 43 ff.; new edition by Gertz, 1915 (new edition of all Danish twelfth-century chronicles, 1917 ff.); translated by J. Olrik, *Krøniker*, etc., pp. 25 ff.; cf. *Saksnes oldhistorie*, i, 97 ff.]

II. *Saxo's History of Denmark* (*Gesta Danorum*), begun before 1185, finished after 1216. Books I–IX treat of the heathen period and were written at a relatively late time [ed. P. E. Müller, 1839 (S); ed. Holder, 1886; translated into Danish by J. Olrik, 1908–12; into English by Elton, Books I–IX, 1894; into German by Jantzen, 1900, and by Herrmann, 1901; cf. *Saksnes oldhistorie*, i, ii; *Arkiv*, xiv, 47–93; J. Olrik in *Dansk Historisk Tidsskrift*, eighth series, ii, 1–53]. Skiold is treated in Saxo, Book I; the Hrolf group, in the latter half of Book II; the Starkath group, in Book VI.

NORWEGIAN SAGAS of the twelfth century used by Saxo, especially viking tales from the west coast of Norway, possibly passed on to Saxo by some Icelandic story-teller. The Hrolf group in the beginning of Book VI (the two persecuted princes); the more loosely connected legends of progenitors in Book I and the beginning of Book II; the Starkath group frequently treated in Books V-VIII.

ICELANDIC MONUMENTS (cf. A. Olrik, *Studier over de islandske Skjoldungesagn*, in a forthcoming number of *Aarbøger* (f. N. F.): *Langfeðgatal* (genealogies) twelfth century (SRD, i, 2; cf. *Saxo oldhistorie*, i, 94). *Skjoldungasaga*, older version of about 1200 (excerpt about Hrolf in Snorri's *Edda*, i, 392-393, used in his *Ynglingasaga*); later form of about 1300 (a summary of it by Arngrím Jónsson, 1594, ed. A. Olrik in *Aarbøger*, 1894). *Biarkarmur*, an unfinished cyclic poem about Hrolf, fifteenth century, based chiefly on the *Skjoldungasaga*. *Hrólfsaga kraka*, fourteenth century (edited together with *Biarkarmur* by F. Jónsson, 1904).

TABLE OF PARALLEL REFERENCES OF THIS WORK AND THE  
ORIGINAL DANISH EDITION (Copenhagen, 1903)

PRESENT EDITION		OLRIK'S ORIGINAL	PRESENT EDITION		OLRIK'S ORIGINAL
Chapter	Division	Division	Chapter	Division	Division
I	1	1	VI	1	28
	2	2		2	29
	3	3		3	30
	4	4	VII	1	31
II	1	5		2	32
	2	6		3	33
	3	7		4	34
	4	8	VIII	1	35
	5	9, 10		2	36
III	1	11		3	37
	2	12		4	38-39
	3	13		5	40
	4	14		6	41
	5	15		7	42
	6	16		8	43
IV	1	17		9	44
	2	18	IX	1	45-50
	3	19			(Summarized)
	4	20		2	51
	5	21	X	1	52
V	1	22		2	53
	2	23	Conclusion		
	3	24		1	54
	4	25		2	55
	5	26		3	
	6	27			



# INDEX



## INDEX

- Absalon, bishop, 428.  
 Achilles, 317.  
 Adam of Bremen, author of  
     *Gesta Hammaburgensis*, 215,  
     330.  
 Adeliza, 254.  
 Adietanus, 159.  
*Admonition, the Song of*, 172.  
 Adonis, 281.  
 Agathias, historian, 159.  
 Ægir, the seagod, 157, 303.  
 Ælfric, 164.  
 Ælfwine, 164 f.  
 Æsir, the (gods), 156, 168.  
 Æskil, Askil, Æskitil, 256, 257.  
 Æthelred, 230.  
 Æthelweard, chronicler, 390 f.  
 Agnar (Hroarsson), 47, 298.  
 Agnar Ingialdsson, 67, 74 ff.,  
     123 ff., 142 ff., 171, 187, 217;  
     232 ff., 299.  
*Agrip*, 293  
 Agvald, 146.  
 Alcuin, 21.  
 Alemanni, the (people), 159.  
 Alevih, Olvir, 23, 498.  
 Alf, king (of Alfheim), 5.  
 Alf, Sigar's son, 23.  
 Alfild, 5, 383, 421.  
 Alfsol, 401.  
 Ali (Onela ?), 80, 349 ff., 485,  
     497.  
 Ali hinn frœkni, 143.  
*Amici* = vinir, friends, 101.  
 Amlet (Hamleth), 240, 308 f.,  
     325, 504.  
 Ammianus Marcellinus (histo-  
     rian), 274.  
 Amram, Rabbi, 410.  
 Anders Byærkesson, 251 f.  
 Angantyr, 61, 133, 230, 429.  
 Angles, the (people), 43, 205.  
*Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, the, 397.  
 Ansbrand, 229.  
 Antes, the (people), 34.  
 Ari the Learned, 429.  
 Aribert, 229.  
 Arngrim, the sons of, 293.  
 Arngrím(ur) Jónsson (scholar),  
     111, 143, 191, 236 f., 264,  
     298 ff., 349, 354, 376 f., 438,  
     501.  
 Arthur, King, 256, 280, 310, 410.  
 Asa, 136.  
 Aschere, 48.  
 Asmund, 314.  
*Ásmundarsaga kappabana*, 258.  
 Asugisal, 44.  
*aðalmerki*, 101.  
 Athulf, 391.  
 Athisl, Athils, Eadgils, 28, 44,  
     67, 79 f., 129, 136, 183, 196 f.,  
     206, 263 f., 311 ff., 376 f., 485.  
*Atlakviða*, 99, 107, 109, 133, 143,  
     194, 209 f.  
*Atlamál*, 62, 424.  
 Atli, Attila, Etzel, 18, 43, 62,  
     207 ff., 314.  
 Attalus, 384, 421, 424.  
 BALDR, 69, 191, 212, 402.  
 Balduin of Boulogne, 414.  
*Bárðarsaga Snæfellsáss*, 219.  
 Baug, Bøk, Bok, 68, 73 f.  
 Baugstadhir, Bogstad, near  
     Kristiania, 73.  
 Belisarius, 72.  
 Beduerus, 256.  
 Beaw (= Beowulf), 248.  
 Beigath, 367 f., 375.



- Beorn Beresun (Biorn), 272, 277, 271 f.
- Beowulf*, the epic of, 12 ff., 70 ff., 119, 146, 163, 206 f., 247 ff., 253, 261 f., 293 f., 348, 353 ff., 422 f.
- Beowulf, Geatish warrior, 13, 30, 46, 50 f., 206 f., 473, 484, 496.
- Beowulf, king, 13, 46, 350.
- Bera, 371, 305.
- Berico, Pericho, 251 f.
- Berki, 251 f.
- Bessus, 424.
- Beyla, 466.
- Biarkamál*, 66 ff., et passim.
- Biarkarímur*, 70, 76, 119, 121, 217 ff., 232 f., 249 f., 255, 257, 296 ff., 373.
- Biarki, 66 ff. et passim; other forms of the name, 251 ff.
- Biarnarsaga Híttdalakappa*, 174.
- Biarni Kólbeinsson, author of *Jónsvikingadrápa*, 174, 486.
- Bierkelöf (village), 251 f.
- Bikki, 63.
- Biorn, 362, 424.
- Biorn Híttdalakappi, 474.
- Biorn stallari, 170.
- "Birchlegs," the (King Sverri's followers), 79, 241.
- Birkæruth (village), 251 f.
- Birkinge (village), 251 f.
- Birky Jensen, 251 f.
- Blind hinn þölvisi, 63.
- Blood-drinking, custom of, 223 ff.
- Boduvar Berki = Þóthvar biarki, 256, 374.
- Bøjstrup (place name), 73.
- Bøkki (for Þóthvar), 259.
- Bone throwing, game of, 219 f.
- Book of Judges*, 426.
- Børgasfirth (district), 253.
- Þóthvar biarki, see Biarki.
- Botild, 256 f.
- Bragi, 434.
- Bragi Boddason, 430.
- Branwen, 360, 490.
- Bravalla battle, see *Bráck Lay*.
- Brávalla Lay*, 105, 154, 161, 173, 173, 174, 182, 187, 252, 255, 324, 368 f.
- Bricriu, 279.
- Britannus (Brittanni), people, 32.
- Brondingas, 440.
- Brot af Brynhildarkvæða*, 224.
- Brother, 256.
- Brynhild, 160, 356.
- Burgundian kings, the, 43, 45, 346.
- Byerkerp (village), 251 f.
- Byggvi, 466.
- Byrhtnoth, 164.
- Byrhtwold, 165.
- CANUTE the Great, 219, 322, 360, 371, 475, 485.
- Caradoc, 310.
- Carolingians, the (royal race), 215.
- Cæsar, 159, 160.
- Catalaunian Plains, the, 43, 61.
- Catalogus* (Danish), 382.
- Catillon, family of, 409.
- Cattle Raid of Cualnge, The*, 426.
- Celtiberians, the (nation), 159, 161.
- Centaur, 223.
- Charlemagne (Kaiser Karl), 142, 152, 280, 318.
- Chanson de Roland* (142), 199.
- Chauci, the (people), 419.
- Chlodovech, 60.
- Chochilaicus, see Hygelac.
- Christ, 21, 166.
- Chugni, the (people), 32.
- Cimbri, the (people), 131, 418.
- Conchobar mac Nessa, 242, 277 f.
- Concla, 410.
- Cosmographia*, by Ethicus Istrius, 32, 33.
- Cuchullin, 278 ff., 425 f.

- DAG Hognason**, 239.  
**Dainsleif** (sword), 146.  
*Dalby björn* (ballad), 226.  
**Dan**, 294, 325, 382 ff., 477 ff.  
**Danerygh** (stone), 335 f.  
**Danes**, appellations of the, 23;  
     naming customs of the, 44;  
     the great slaughter of, 230.  
**Dannevirke**, the (fortifications),  
     216.  
*Dansk Kongetal* (ballad)  
**David**, 425.  
**Daukiones**, the (people), 31.  
**Dechtire**, 278 f.  
**Delbaeth**, 279.  
*De Lupo duce*, poem by Venan-  
     tius Fortunatus, 32.  
**Diarmaid**, 289 f.  
**Dietrich von Bern**, *see* Theodoric  
**Dio Cassius**, historian, 273.  
*Domesday-book*, the, 201, 272.  
**Draupnir** (ring), 192.  
**Driva**, **Drifa**, 187, 236, 376.  
**Durham**, church of, 256 f.  
  
**EADGILS**, *see* Athisl.  
**Ealdhelm**, 165.  
**Ebbi**, 234 f.  
**Ebroin**, 409 f.  
**Ecglaf**, 57.  
**Ecgtheow**, 46.  
**Ecgvela**, 46, 49.  
*Edda, the Elder* (Sæmundar,  
     Poetic), 153, 180, 207 ff., 361.  
**Egil Skallagrimsson** (skald), 109,  
     157, 253, 449.  
**Eilif**, 231.  
**Einar Baughason**, 73.  
**Einar skalaglam** (skald), 174,  
     446.  
**Einar Skulason** (skald), 194, 197.  
*Einheriar*, 168, 211.  
**Eir**, 466.  
**Eiric**, *see* Eric.  
*Eiríksmál*, 153, 176, 204, 211 ff.  
**Eitil**, 62.  
**Elan** (?), 27.  
  
**Elgfrothi**, 225, 372.  
**Emmeranus**, Saint, 410.  
**Enses** Theutonici = *saxsverð*,  
     105.  
**Eochaid**, Eri, 279.  
**Eofor**, 77, 78.  
**Eric Bloody-axe**, 161, 176, 211 f.,  
     257, 449, 490.  
**Eric** (son of Frothi), 297.  
**Eric the Wise-spoken** (mal-  
     spaki), 182, 448, 489.  
**Erilar**, 44.  
**Erling Skialgsson**, 107, 174.  
**Ermanric**, **Jarmunrik**, **Jormun-**  
     **rekk**, 18, 25, 26, 43, 63, 72,  
     133, 210, 346.  
**Ermelin**, 254.  
**Erminon**, town in France, 272.  
**Erp**, 62.  
**Esben**, Strong, 226.  
**Escalot**, Lady of, 409 f.  
**Esel**, 256.  
**Eska**, 303.  
**Eskil**, 256.  
**Estret**, 256.  
**Ethicus**, Istrius, author of *Cos-*  
     *mographia*, 32.  
**Eysteín**, 241.  
**Eyvindr hialti**, 253.  
**Eyvind skaldaspillir** (skald) 111,  
     175 f., 252, 352, 449, 470, 488.  
**Etzel**, *see* Atli.  
**Euthio**, **Euthiones** (people), 32.  
  
**FÄFNIR**, 59, 192, 224.  
*Fáfnismál*, 224.  
**Fair Isle**, 458.  
**Falster**, Danish island, 258.  
*Færeyingasaga*, 223.  
**Faroe Islands**, 66, 181, 219.  
**Faroese magic formula**, 115.  
**Fengi**, 240.  
**Fenia**, 192, 194, 449 ff.  
**Fenris-wolf**, the, 157, 212.  
*Finnbogasaga*, 223, 257, 426.  
**Finnbogi**, 223, 257, 425 f.  
**Finngalkn**, Sphinx, 222 f.

- Finnmarken, province of Norway, 223.  
 Finno, 259.  
 Finnsburg (hall), 16.  
*Finnsburg Fragment*, the, 145, 146, 163.  
 Fjolnir, 456.  
 Fjölvar, 154.  
 Fionn, Finn, 288 ff., 426.  
*Flateyrbók*, 231, 316, 363 f., 430 ff.  
 Flensburg, the burgomaster of, 243.  
 Florentius Wigornensis (chronicler), 272.  
 Flosi, 411.  
*Fornaldarsögur*, 77, 111, 125, 131, 199, 219, 223 f., 248, 366, 506.  
*Fornmannasögur*, 146, 174, 219.  
*Fólbæðsbrásaga*, 169, 200.  
 Franks, the (people), 60, 275.  
 Freawaru, 15 f., 64, 206, 250.  
 Frey, *see* Ingvi.  
 Frigg, 97, 130 f., 151.  
 Frisians, Frisii (people), 18, 32, 50, 145, 146, 163, 206.  
 Frithleif, 449, 475, 477 ff.  
*Frithleifssaga*, 362.  
*Fríðo-vebbe* ('weaver of peace'), 64.  
 Froda, *see* Frothi.  
 Frodas, 311.  
 Frothi the Peaceful, 15 f., 26, 62, 84, 175, 242, 270, 325, 402, 426, 442 ff. = "Peace-Frothi" 117, 446 ff.  
 Fulkaris, 158.  
 Funen, Danish island, 37, 39, 226, 257, 266, 432.  
 Fyrisvellir, the Fyre Plains, 67, 93, 117, 175, 315, 353.  
 "GABILUN" (= Chamsleon), 224.  
 Galterus, author of '*Alexandreis*' 100, 118.  
 Garibald, 241.  
 Garm (dog), 360 ff.  
 Gauls, the (nation), 159 f.  
 Gautar, Gauts (Gothi), the (people), 32, 81 ff., 234.  
 Gautland, *see* Gotland.  
*Gautreks saga*, 125.  
 Gawain, 279 f.  
 Geatas, Geats, the (people); *see also* s. Gautar, 13, 29, 32, 39, 78 f., 206, 351; naming custom of the, 44.  
 Gefion, 383, 432 f.  
 Gefn, 434.  
 Geigath, 77, 172.  
 Geirræth, 241, 463.  
 Gellir, 362.  
 Geoffrey of Monmouth, author of *Historia Britonum*, 256.  
 Gervasius of Tilbury, 409 f.  
*Gestis*, 101.  
 Gest (Othin), 363.  
 Gest Bartharson, 361.  
 Geta, a Goth, 32.  
*Getica*, by Jordanes, 32, 34, 353.  
*Gevninge MS.*, the, 343.  
 Gisli Súrsson (skald), 115.  
 Giukungs, the (royal race), 269, 224, 346.  
 Giurth (Guðræðr), 215.  
 Givrinarhol (cave), 462.  
 Glasir (grove), 192 f.  
 Glathsheim (Valhalla), 125.  
 Guita-heath, the, 209.  
 Gnupa, 215, 328.  
 Godebert, 241.  
 Godfrey of Bouillon, 413 f., 441.  
*Gold Period*, coins and bracteates of the, 36 ff.  
*Golden Horn of Gallehus*, the, 44.  
 Goliath, 425.  
 Gondul, 90.  
*Gongu-Hrólfssaga*, 219.  
 Gorm (father of Harold Blue-tooth), 215, 339.  
 Gorm the Old, 215.  
 Gothgest, 352.

- Goðhialti, 252.  
 Gothorm, 433 f.  
 Götland, modern province of Sweden, 32, 37, 67, 234.  
 Grafvitnir (serpent), 192 f.  
 Gram, 506.  
*Grammatical Treatise, Third*, by Olaf Thorðarson, 146, 172.  
 Grani (horse), 192 f., 352, 356.  
 Gregory of Tours (chronicler), 32.  
 Grendel, 13, 15, 20, 30, 48, 49 f., 247, 405; his dam, 57.  
 Grettir, 405.  
 Griffith, 310.  
*Grímnismál*, 361, 363, 466.  
 Gripir, 168.  
*Grottasöngur* (*Quern Song*), 269 ff., 306 f., 324, 430, 449 ff.  
 Grotti (magic mill), 117, 449 ff.  
 Grotti-Fenni, -Minnie, 458.  
*Gulathingslaw*, 426.  
 Gullinhialti (sword), 222, 257.  
 Gull-Thori, 475.  
 Gullveig, 468.  
 Gundestrup, caldron of, 425.  
 Gunnar, 133, 140, 143, 209 f.  
 Gunnhild Kingmother, 293.  
 Gunsten, 256.  
 Gustavus, King, 243.  
 Guthorm (brother of Gunnar and Högni), 224.  
 Guthorm (king), 452.  
 Guthorm (persecuted prince), 63.  
 Guthrun, 62, 64, 141, 204, 210, 225.  
*Guðrúnarhvat*, 105, 111, 202, 204.  
*Guðrúnarkviða*, 115.  
 Gutí (Gauti ?) (people), 31, (*see also s. Gautar*).  
 Gylfi, 432 f.
- HABROK** (hawk), 360 ff.  
 Hadding, 63, 225, 248, 472 f., 506.  
 Haddingjaskati, 424.  
*Haddingssaga*, 63, 225.
- Hadulaikar, 44.  
 Haduvulafr, 44.  
 Hæruvulafr, 44.  
 Hagbarth, 23, 162, 242, 470.  
 Hagen, 224.  
 Hagustaldar, 44.  
 Haki enn frækni, 367 (401).  
 Haki Hamundarson, 77, 147, 242, 364, 401 ff., 437, 470.  
 Haklang, 367 f.  
 Hakon jarl (the Great), 252, 446.  
 Hakon the Good, 153, 161.  
*Hákonarmál*, 107, 111, 131, 135, 153, 161, 175 f., 212 f., 470 f.  
*Hákonarsaga góða*, 153.  
*Háleygiatal*, 176, 252, 352.  
 Half, 143, 171, 199, 364.  
 Halfdan, Healfdene, 13, 26, 27, 30, 42, 44 ff., 69, 144, 261 ff., 322 f., 424.  
 Halfdan, slayer of Roe and Scatus, 63.  
 Halfdan svartí, 212.  
 Halfdan the Mountain-strong, 234 f., 488, 506.  
*Hálfskviða* (*Lay of Hálf*), 103, 131, 133, 314.  
*Hálfssaga*, 143, 146, 172, 189, 262 ff., 316, 365.  
 Halga, *see* Helgi.  
 Hall (skald), 375.  
 Hamlet, *see* Amleth.  
 Hamthir, 18, 141, 210.  
*Hamðismál*, 18, 133.  
 Hamund, 63.  
 Handuwan, 472.  
*Haraldssaga gráfelds*, 175.  
*Hárbarðsljóð*, 154, 463.  
 Hardegón, *see* Horthaknut.  
 Harold Gormsson (Bluetooth), 215.  
 Harold Hairfair, 211 f., 293, 366 f.  
 Harold harthrathi, 72, 79.  
 Harold hildetand (Wartooth), 45, 136, 161, 322, 324 f., 335, 345, 355, 402, 431, 482 f.

- Harold (= Hroar), 296 f.  
 Hariso, 259.  
 Harivulafa, 44.  
 Harr enn harthgreipi, 108, 188, 367 f.  
 Harthæ sysæl, shire in Denmark, 81.  
 Harthrefil, 367 f.  
 Hastein Hromundarson, 174.  
 Hasting, 473.  
*Háttalykill*, 123, 375 f., 380.  
 Hattvarii, the (people), 440.  
 Hauk habrok, 364.  
 Hauk Valdisarson (skald), 363.  
*Hávamál*, 118, 115, 119, 168, 176.  
 Havelok, the Dane, 310 f.  
 Healfdene, *see* Halfdan.  
 Heardred, 350.  
 Heathobards, the (people), 15 ff. 40, 70, 78, 143, 206, 233, 250, 252 ff., 293 ff., 342, 440 f., 496.  
 Hedeby (town), 266.  
 Hedne (= Heðinn), 257.  
*Heimskringla*, 79, 101, 103, 107, 115, 129, 153, 169 f., 174, 175, 183, 200, 241.  
 Heithr, 307.  
 Hekling, 146.  
 Helgi, Halga, 13, 14, 30, 44 f., 70, 260, 293 f., 424, 467; etymology, 47.  
*Helgakviða Hundingsbana* I, 278, 326, 392, 439, 446; II, 109, 115, 239, 406, 424.  
 Helgi Hundingsbani, 115, 140, 239, 303 f., 326, 392.  
*Héliand*, 166.  
 Helmingas (royal race), 439.  
*Helreið Brynhildar*, 154.  
 Heltborg (village), 252.  
 Helzo, Hilzo, Helzuvin, 253.  
 Helzolt, 253.  
 Hengest, 145.  
 Hengikipt, 456.  
 Heorogar, 13, 14, 30, 45, 48; etymology, 47.  
 Heorot (hall), 13, 15, 16 ff., 31, 38 ff., 294 ff., 340.  
 Heoroweard, *see* Hiarvarth.  
 Heracles, 425 f.  
 Heremod, Hermoth, 23, 46, 49, 206, 355, 390, 498.  
 Hergrim, 5.  
 Heruli, the (people), 31 f., 158, 441 = Eruli?, 35.  
*Hervararkviða*, 127.  
*Hervarsaga*, 99, 133, 230, 293, 429, 487.  
 Hervard, 374.  
 Hethe, 266.  
 Hetvarii, Attuati (people), 39, 275.  
*Hiðlmarskviða*, 121.  
 Hialmther, 223.  
 Hialtadal, district in Iceland, 254.  
 Hialti, 66 ff., 147 ff., 217 ff., *et passim*.  
 Hialtland (Shetland), 253 f.  
 Hialtr, 253 f.  
 Hiarni skald, 242.  
 Hiarthvar, 134.  
 Hiarvarth, Heoroweard, 14, 22, 27, 28, 45, 67 ff., 203, 210, 426 *et passim*.  
 Hild, 93, 103, 183, 195, 231, 316.  
 Hildebrand, Hiltibrant, 3, 4.  
*Hildebrand, Lay of*, 3.  
 Hildebrand, story of (*Thithreks-saga*), 146.  
 Hildeburg, 54, 64, 206.  
 Hildisvin, hildigolt (helmet), 350.  
 Hilziperga, 253.  
 Himbræ sysæl (Himmerland), shire in Denmark, 31.  
*Himlingöje Period*, graves and utensils of the, 36 f.  
 Hiniældus, *see* Ingiald.  
 Hiqrleif, 316.  
*Hirðmenn*, 'king's bodyguard,' 101, 200 ff.  
*Hirðskrá* (statutes), 244.

- Historia Britonum*, by Geoffrey of Monmouth, 256.  
*Historia Francorum*, by Gregory of Tours, 32.  
*Historia regis Waldei*, 311.  
Hleguðr, 267.  
Hler, 303.  
Hlevagastir, 44.  
Hlōth, 61, 429.  
Hlōðakviða, 99, 103, 105, 109, 133, 230, 335.  
Hneitir (sword), 146.  
Hocingas, Hœkings, the, 18, 44, 50, 146, 439.  
*Hofutlausn*, by Egil Skallagrímsson, 449.  
Hogni, 140 ff., 210, 223.  
Hösbjærg (village), 251 f.  
Hok, Hoc, 145 f.  
Hœking (Heking, Hoking), sea-king, 146.  
Hœking (sword), 74, 95, 125, 145 f, 174.  
Holmgöngu-Bersi, 174, 256.  
Holt, 44.  
Hœnir, 428.  
Horn, (parish), 149, 257.  
Hœrthaknut, Hardegón, 215.  
Hœthbrodd, 296, 303.  
Hœthr, 69.  
Hœtt (Hialti), 218.  
*Hrafnsmál*, 133, 204, 211 ff.  
Hrani (Othin), 354, 364.  
Hreithmar, 59.  
Hrethel, 78.  
Hrethlings, the (royal race), 44.  
Hrethric, *see* Hroerek.  
Hring, *see* Sigurth hring.  
Hringhorni (ship), 402.  
Hroar Hrothgar, 12 ff., 45 ff., 69 ff., 206, 250, 261 ff., 293 ff., 392, 467 f.; etymology, 47.  
Hroir, 295.  
Hrok, 69, 70, 133, 145, 171.  
Hrok, son of Regin, 297 ff.  
Hrolf, earl (karl), 264 ff.  
Hrolf kraki, Hrothulf, 12 ff., et *passim*, 47, 55 ff., 66 ff., 155, 294.  
Hrolfr skjotandi (skiothendi), 103, 183, 367 f.  
*Hrolfssaga kraka*, 62, 69 ff., 183 ff., 283 ff., 348 ff., et *passim*.  
Hromundr hartí, 367.  
Hrorar, Hroren, 44.  
Hroerek (Ingialdason), Hrethric, 13, 14, 22, 30, 45, 47, 54 ff.; 66 ff., 137, 145, 187, 206, 293 ff., 477 ff.  
Hrossthiof, 307.  
Hrothgar, *see* Hroar.  
Hrothmund, 18, 22, 30, 45, 47, 62.  
Hrothulf, *see* Hrolf kraki.  
Hrungni, 451.  
Hrunting (sword), 146.  
Hrut (Ruta), 89, 92 ff., 110 ff., 144 f., 151 ff., 185 ff., 217 ff., 250, 422.  
Hrutr, 144.  
Hugleik, *see* Hygelac.  
Humblus, Humli, 429.  
Hunerik, 229.  
Hunferth, Hunfrith, *see* Unferth.  
Hunlaf, 45.  
Hunlafing (sword), 145 f.  
Huns, the, 3, 61, 209.  
*Háskariahvot* (= *Biarkamál*), 200 ff., 210.  
*Háskarlar*, 'housecarls,' 200 ff., 210.  
Hviting (sword).  
Hvitserk, 191, 367 f., 375 ff., 487.  
Hygelac, Hugleik, Chochilaicus, 28, 29, 30, 32, 275.  
Hymi, 466.  
*Hyndluljóð*, 322, 355, 424.  
IBN Dustah (geographer), 392.  
Infidelity, punishments for, 229.  
Ing, 23, 399, 416 f.

- Ingeld, *see* Ingiald.  
 Ingiald (Frothason), Ingeld, Ingellus, 15 f., 47, 55, 69, 76, 85, 202, 204 f., 250 f., 421, 477 ff.  
 Ingiald illrathi, 61, 225.  
 Ingiald (Ingeld), Lay of (*Starkarðarhvat*), 15, 16, 21 f., 101, 168, 202, 204, 324, 367.  
 Ingui(o), Yngvi, Ingvi-Freyr, 418 f., 429 f.  
 Ingvaones (= Ingwine), 399, 419 f.  
 Ingwine (people), 416 f.  
 Innstein, 133, 171.  
 Innstein, Lay of, 143, 199.  
 Isafjord, 241 f.  
 Islandingadrápa, 363.  
 Istaby, stone of, 44.  
 Ithi, 192 f., 451.  
 Ithun, 484.  
 Ivar vithfathmi, 61.  
 Ivor, 310.
- JÆRMUNREK.** *Jærmunrekk*, *see* Erimanic.  
 Jelling (Heath), 396, 398, 399.  
 Jæmtland, 73.  
 Jömsvíkingadrápa, 174.  
 Jömsvíkingasaga, 367.  
 Jomsvikings, the (warrior association), 230.  
 Jordanes, author of *Getica*, 32, 33, 34, 229, 272 f., 353.  
 Julianus, emperor, 159, 274.  
 Justin, Roman historian, 130.  
 Juvenal, 106.
- KADMOΣ**, 115.  
 Kaldhamarsnaut (sword), 146.  
 Kálfsvísa, 351 f.  
 Kay, 310.  
 Ketil hæng, 474.  
 Kjalarnes, district in Iceland.  
 Kiar, 209.  
 King Henry, ballad of, 291.  
 Knodomar, 159.  
 Knui, 452, 466.
- Kon, 421.  
 Königsbuch *son From*, 496.  
 Konungasögur, 154.  
 Kormak, 362.  
 Kormáksaga, 174, 363.  
 Kragehul moor, 40, 44.  
 Kraki, meaning of, 318 f.  
 Krákumál, 143, 194, 196.  
 Krimhild, 500.  
 Kúdrán (epic), 224, 360.  
 Kvalba, on Suderø, 219.
- LARING** (sword).  
 Lamissio, 444.  
 Landnámabók, 125, 174, 294, 253 f., 362 ff.  
 Langfeðgalal, 69, 380, 429 f., 521.  
 Langobards, the, 229, 241, 274, 440.  
 Lapland hunters, customs of, 123, 223 f.  
 Lauf, Løvi (sword), 76, 123, 173, 232, 299, 363.  
 'Law of the Twins' in popular poetry, 62.  
 Laxdælasaga, 363.  
 -leif, -lof, women's names in, 269.  
 Leire Castle, 66 f., 190 f., 149 f., 151 f., 218 ff., 294 ff., 324 ff., et passim; etymology, 340.  
 Leire Chronicle, 82, 149, 242, 264 ff., 294 f., 325 f., 334 f.  
 Lena, battle of, 154, 180.  
 Leofsunu, 165.  
 Liber Vite of the church of Durham, 256 f.  
 Liculf, 256.  
 Limfjord, the 31.  
 Lindholm, Old, 343 f.  
 Líbvetningasaga, 254.  
 Locchi, 256.  
 Lokasenna, 105, 111, 466.  
 Lolland (island), 264, 275.  
 London, 230 f.  
 'Loose End,' in popular poetry, 20.  
 Lotherus, Loður, 428.

Lucan, 108, 130.

Lug, 279.

Lysing (sword).

*MABINOGION*, the, 360.

Macbeth, 311.

Magdeburg, 272.

Magnus Erlingsson, 242.

*Magnus Erlingssons saga*, 241.

Magnus, the Good, 72.

*Málaháttir*, verse, 209, 211, 214.

*Maldon, the Battle of* (epic), 164, 167.

Maelsechlainn, 474.

*Málsháttakvæði* (*Fornyrðadrápa*), 255, 486.

Mardall, 192 f.

*Marriage of Sir Gawain*, the (ballad), 291.

Maternus, Saint, 409 f.

Melbric(us), Melbrigthi, 472 f.

Memering, 392.

Menia, 449 ff.

Mercians, the (people), 165.

*Meriadoc*, 310, 490.

Merovingians, the, 275, 293.

Mher, 425 f.

Midfirth-Skeggi, 175, 362 f.

Migration Period, royal treasures in the, 72; helmets used during the, 109; method of burial, 266.

*Milites*, 101.

Mimir, 157.

Mora stone, 335.

Morven, 310.

Mrla, 260.

Myrrha, 281.

Mysing, 456 ff.

*NÆGLING* (sword), 146.

Nes, district in S. Norway, 180.

*Níalssaga*, 411, 475.

*Nibelungenlied*, 18, 360.

Nibelungs, the, 72, 192 f., 346.

Nithuthr, 63.

Niuvila, 259.

Nivang (?), 44.

Noah, 397.

Normandy, Nortmannia, 215, 256.

'Norn' (meaning), 5.

*Nornagests þáttir*, 364.

Nørre-Tranders (village), 251.

Norrland, province of Sweden, 223.

Nydam moor, 40.

Ø (ISLAND), 226.

Oda, 293.

*Oddrúnargrátr*, 194.

Odensberg (mountain), 152.

Odovakar, 61.

Oedipus, 280.

Oehlenschläger, Danish poet, 285 ff.

Offa, Uffi, 23, 172, 206, 422, 442, 482.

Olaf, King (9th cent.), 325, 334.

Olaf (father of Gnupa), 215.

Olaf helgi (Saint Olaf) Haraldsson, 66, 133, 146, 169, 174, 200, 315, 433 f.

*Ólafsdrápa*, 133.

*Ólafssaga, the Larger* (*Flateyrbók*), II, 363.

*Ólafssaga helga* (*Heimskringla*), 101, 107, 200, 322.

*Ólafssaga, the Legendary*, 169.

*Ólafssaga Tryggvasonar* (*Heimskringla*), 107, 146.

Olaf Tryggvason, 361.

*Ólaf Tryggvason, the Large Saga of*, 230.

Öland (island), 37, 82.

Olaus Magnus, 357 f.

*Old Testament*, 271.

Ole frœkni, 361.

Oleifr hialti, 253.

Oliver, 142.

Oluf (queen) hin rika, 262 ff., 503.

Olvir, *see* Alevih.

Onela ? *see also* s. Ali, 27, 350.



- Ongentheow, 77.  
 Orkney Islands, 254, 457 f.  
 Orm kingsbrother, 79.  
 Orm Storolfsson, 405.  
 Orni, 451.  
 Orvar-Odd, 223.  
 Orwen, 310.  
 Osbern, 256.  
 Osgod, 256.  
 Østerdal, province of Norway, 224.  
 Ostrogoths (people), 32, 45, 72.  
 Othin, Oden, Woden, Un, 89, 97, 130 ff., 139, 143, 151 ff., 180 f., 211, 241, 287, 353 ff., 363 f., 383, 394, 406 ff., 428 ff.  
 Othinsey (Odense), 432 f.  
 Otr, 192.  
 Ottar, Ohthere, 44, 350.  
 Ovid, 100, 104, 106, 110, 114, 115.  
 PALTISCA (city), 472.  
 Paulus Diaconus, author of *Historia Langobardorum*, 220, 241.  
 "Peace-Frothi," *see* Frothi the Peaceful.  
 Peder Laale, collector of proverbs, 113, 129.  
 Peder Syv, collector of proverbs, 259.  
 Pentland Firth, 457 f.  
 Petre, 256.  
*Proceres* = king's followers, 101, 198.  
 Prokopios, author of *De bello Gothico*, 32, 72, 411.  
 Prudentius (poet), 110.  
 RAGNAR lothbrok, 72, 143, 325, 367, 474 f.  
*Ragnar's Deathsong*, 199.  
*Ragnarssaga loðbrókar*, 146.  
 Randver, 63.  
 Raven, Hrafn (horse), 350 f.  
 Refil, Ræfil, 368.  
 Regin, 210.  
 Regin, earl, 297.  
 Regner, 63, 136.  
 Reichenau, abbey, 272.  
 Rheims, 272 f.  
 Rhinegold, the, 72, 192.  
*Rígspula*, 121.  
 Rikui, 256.  
 Rimsa, rune-stone, 214.  
 Ring, *see* Sigurth hring.  
 Ringsted (town), 37, 326, 333.  
 Ro(e), 63, 325.  
 Rodulf, 32.  
 Roger (Norman baron), 414 f.  
 Rognvald jarl Kali, author of the *Háttalykkil*, 123.  
 Roland, 142, 280, 318.  
*Romance of Lancelot*, 409.  
 Roman Period, jewels and drinking vessels of, 36, 40.  
 Rome, 273.  
 Romulus and Remus, 309.  
 Ronaldsey (island), 456.  
 Roundingas, 440.  
 Roskilde (firth of), 149, 295, 302; etymology, 295.  
 (Rota) Rosta, valkyria, 144.  
 Rotala (city), 472.  
 Royal treasures, *see* Migration Age.  
*Rune Song*, 23, 399, 416 f.  
 Rus (people), 402.  
 Rustem, 425.  
*Ryd Abbey, Chronicle of*, 268.  
 Rygbjærg, Store, rune-stone, 214.  
 SAGA af þorsteini bármagns, 219.  
 Sæhrimni, 466.  
 Saint Olaf, *see* Olaf helgi.  
*Salkus* ('hall'), 210.  
 Samson, 425.  
*Satellites*, 101, 198.  
 Sætedal, Province of Norway, 200.  
 Sævil jarl, 310.  
 Saxland, 262 ff.

- Saxo Grammaticus, 69 f., 108 ff., 264 ff., et passim.  
 Saxons, the, 31, 32, 205.  
 Sca(n)dinavia, Scaney, Scedeland, Scedenig, 24, 25, 82, 154, 179, 391 ff.  
 Scatus, Skat(i), Scazo, 63, 384, 421 ff.  
 Scef, Sceaf, Sceafa, 390 ff.  
 Scheldt river, 275.  
 Scilfings, the (royal race), 44.  
 Sclaveni, the (people), 34.  
 Scyldings (Scyldingas, Skioldungar), 12 ff., 261 et passim; etymology, 437.  
 Servius Grammaticus, 159.  
 Shetland Islands, 253.  
 Shorthair, servant of Conchobar, 242.  
 Sif, 192 f.  
 Sigehere, Sigar, 23, 37, 66, 234, 242, 326, 470, 498.  
 Sigersted (town), 37, 326.  
 Siggeir, 277 f., 314.  
 Sighvat skald Thorðarson, author of the *Ólafsdrápa*, 105, 107, 133, 170, 189, 200.  
 Sigmund, Sigemund, 62, 277, 355, 392, 406, 475.  
 Sigmund (father of Helgi Hundingsbani), 239.  
 Sigmund, character in the *Færeyingasaga*, 228.  
 Signe, 162.  
 Signy, 62, 277 f.  
 'Signy's lament,' 278.  
 Sigrith, 298.  
*sigrúnar* ('signs of victory'), 152.  
 Sigruth, 234.  
 Sigurth, earl, 473.  
 Sigurth Fafnibani, 115, 160, 162, 168, 210, 224 f., 278, 309, 352, 356, 425, 474 f.  
 Sigurth hring, 345, 401 ff., 487.  
*Sigurðarkviða in skamma*, 160, 194.  
 Siklings, race of the, 3, 63.  
 Sinfiotli, 62, 140, 277 ff., 406 ff., 425.  
 Sinnar = *procures*, 101.  
 Sisar, 77, 125, 171.  
 Sivard digri (the Stout), 30, 371 ff., 474, 490 f., 505.  
 Skafti, 254.  
 Skalk, *scealc* = *puer*, 103 f.  
 Skilfingar (royal race), 439.  
 Skiold, Scyld, 12 et passim; origin of name, 437 ff.; 'god of the Scanians,' 433 ff.  
*Skioldungasaga*, 69, 76, 82, 143, 187 ff., 236 ff., 259, 285, 298 ff., 325, 348 f., 373, 380, 430 f., 507.  
 Skirnir, 105.  
*Skírnisfgr*, 105.  
 Skofnung (sword), 146, 175, 362 f.  
 Skuld, 81 ff., 186 f., 292 ff., et passim.  
 Skuldelev (estate), 82, 149.  
 Skupi, 256.  
 Skur, 191, 376.  
 Sleipnir (steed), 97, 154.  
 Slesvig, 39, 226, 328.  
 Sli firth, 226.  
*Sniofrith*, 293.  
 Snirtir, Snyrtir, Biarki's sword, 74, 95 f., 105, 146; etymology, 123.  
 Snorri Sturlason, author of (Snorri's) *Edda*, *Heimskringla*, 105, 169, 183 f., 361, 363.  
*Snorri's Edda* (Snorra Edda), 105, 125, 131, 146, 183, 226, 269 f., 313 f., 349 f., 366, 383, 402, 424, 430 f., 449.  
*Sogubrot*, 187, 487.  
*Soldurii*, 160.  
*Sonartorrek*, by Egil Skallagrimsson, 157.  
 Sorli, 18.  
 Southern Isles, the (Hebrides), 254, 288.

- Spain, 159.  
 Spracing, 272.  
 Starkath Aludreng, 5.  
 Starkath, son of Storverk, 4 ff., 16, 77, 125, 171 f., 182, 202, 204 f., 292 f., 355, 364, 378, 478, 490 f.  
*Starkartarhugi*, see *Lay of Ingiald*.  
 Starolf, 367 f.  
 Statius, author of *Sylva*, 273.  
 Stentofta (Sweden) rune-stone, 44.  
 Stephanus (scholar), 335 f.  
 St. Gallen (cloister), 272.  
 Stiklastad, battle of, 66, 169 f., 174, 175, 189 f., 197, 200, 364.  
*Stjornu-Odda draumr*, 267.  
 Storverk, 5.  
 Strand (village), 44.  
 Strassburg, 274.  
*Sturlungasaga*, 254.  
 Styrmir, 433 f.  
 Suderø, one of the Faroe Islands, 219.  
 Sure, 256.  
 Svanløg, 136.  
 Svealand, ancient province of Sweden, 38, 67.  
 Svein Estrithson, 79, 230, 324.  
 Sven Aggison (chronicler), 219 f., 305 ff., 327 ff., 382 ff., 437.  
 Sverrir, King, 372.  
*Sverrissaga*, 79.  
 Sverting, 16, 298, 501.  
 Sviagris (ring), 299 f., 350.  
 Svip, 376 f.  
 Svipdagr (blindi), 367, 373, 375 ff., 485 f., 494.  
*Svipdag*, *Lay of*, 466.  
 Svoldr, battle of, 174.  
 Swan-Knight, 399, 413 ff., 441.  
 Sweden, senate (Riksråd) of, 243.  
 Swedes, naming custom of the, 44.
- TACITUS, author of 'Germania,' 159.  
 Tætva, 443.  
 Thames, the, 230.  
 Theodorada, 229.  
 Theodoric, Thithrek, Dietrich von Bern, 3 f., 32, 43, 61, 172, 317 f., 346.  
 Thiasi, 192 f., 451.  
 Thietmar of Merseburg, 326 ff.  
 Thiotholf inn hvinverski, author of *Ynglingatal*, 45, 176, 318, 351 f.  
*Thingmannakith* (king's followers), 230.  
*Thiðreksaga*, 223, 223, 246.  
 Thomas, apostle, 166.  
 Thor (Hlorrithi), 4, 5, 153, 267, 402, 433 f., 463.  
 Thora, 264 ff.  
 Thorald, 63.  
 Thorbiörn hornklofi, (skald), author of the *Hrafnsmál*, 212 f.  
 Thorbrand, 369.  
 Thore, 256.  
 Thorey, Turø, 264 f., 275.  
 Thorgial, 473 f.  
 Thorir hjøtr, 361.  
 Thorismund, 61.  
 Thorkel Eyjolfsson, 362.  
 Thormoth (skald), 101, 169, 200.  
 Thorðr vøggvøðr (vøggv), 258.  
 Thorvald Blønduskald, 194.  
 Thruwin, 256.  
 Thurkil, 256.  
 Thururc, 256.  
 Thyra, 339.  
*Togdrápa*, 129.  
*Tókapáttir*, 364.  
 Toki, 256.  
 Toki Gormsson, 158.  
 Torfi, 146.  
 Torsbjærg moor, 40; sheath, 44.  
 Torsborg, 345.  
 Tosti, 256.  
 Toti, 256.  
 Tryggevælde rune-stone, 214.

- Trysil, district in Østerdal, 224.  
 Turø, *see* Thorey.  
 Tyrping (sword), 146, 241.  
 UDLEIRE (hamlet), 334.  
 Uffi, *see* Offa.  
 Uhtred, 360.  
 Ulf (Wulf), 77, 256.  
*Ulf fan Jærn* (ballad), 172.  
 Ulfhild, 472 ff.  
 Ulster, 242.  
 Ulver, sir, 241.  
 Unferth, Unfrith, Unifrid, 49 ff., 254, 484, 498.  
 Unguinus, 234.  
 Upland, province of Sweden, 38, 133, 201.  
 Urien, 310.  
 Ursela, Ursena (rivernames), 272.  
 Ursen, Ursingen — and similar names of places, 272.  
 Ursio — and similar names, 269, 272 ff.  
 Utgarthaloiki, 466.  
 Urðarkottr, 257.  
 VÆGMUND, 46.  
 Valdemar, 226.  
 Valkyrias, the, 153, 212.  
 Valland, 154.  
 Vandals, the (people), 72, 229.  
 Var, 466.  
 Vasco, a Gascon, 32.  
*Vederlov*, 'Witherlaw,' 201, 219.  
*Vellekla*, poem by Einar skalamagl, 174, 446.  
 Venantius Fortunatus, poet, 32.  
 Vendel, village in Swedish Upland, 38, 133, 408.  
*Vendel Period*, finds of the, 38 f.  
 Vendil, province of Denmark, 25.  
 Vener lake, 77, 196.  
 Venethi, the (people), 34.  
 Verdun (city), 275.  
 Vergil, 104, 106, 130.  
 Vermund, 482.  
 Veseti, Vithseti, 367.  
 Veðrhialti, 252.  
 Vicga, 258.  
 Vifil, 310.  
*Vígaglúms saga*, 320.  
*Viga-Styr*, 256.  
 Viggeir, Vigeir, 258.  
 Viggi (Voggr, Vøggr, Vavgr), 236 ff., 257 ff., 372, 502.  
 Vigi (dog), 361.  
 Vikar, 364.  
*Víkarsbálk*, 4, 5, 6, 77, 125, 171.  
 Viking Age, 45 et passim; its swords, 121; sword names in the, 146; its sword oath, 240; pet names of the, 259 f.  
 Vikings, the (people), *see* Wicingas.  
 Vili, 157.  
 Vi moor, 40.  
 Visigoths, the, 6, 72, 229.  
 Vissing, South, rune-stone, 214.  
 Vistula, the, 206.  
*Vita Offæ*, 281.  
 Viðar, 434.  
 Vithga, 223.  
 Vitholf, 307.  
 Vitti, 472.  
 Vøgg, *see* Viggi.  
 Volga, hero, 293.  
 Volsung, 277.  
*Volsungasaga*, 62, 225, 277 f., 372, 426.  
 Volsungs, the (royal race), 486.  
 Volthuthevar, 44.  
 Vølund, 63.  
*Vølundarkviða*, 63.  
*Vøluspa*, 307, 428, 468.  
*Vøluspa in skamma*, 307.  
 Vordingborg rune-stone, 144.  
 Vottr, 367 f.  
 WALDEF, 311, 490.  
 Valdemar, 421.  
 Wealhtheow, 22 f., 49 f., 484, 498.  
 Weders, the (people), 164.  
 Wegge, Wigge, 258.  
 Wendlas, the (people), 25.

- Wends, the (people), 60.  
 Western Islands, the, 253.  
 Wicingas, the (people), 18, 26, 35, 440.  
*Widsið, the Lay of*, 12, 22, 23, 24, 37, 41, 53, 55, 109, 146, 206, 232, 233, 348, 396, 440.  
*Wiglaf*, 107, 163 f., 166.  
 Wild Huntsman, the, 164.  
 William, Abbot, 382.  
 William of Malmesbury (chronicler), 386.  
 "Witherlaw," *see* Vederlov.  
*Woman Murderer, the (Kvinda-morderen)*, ballad, 241.  
 Wolf, 77, 266.  
 YLFINGAR (royal race), 439.  
*Ynglingasaga*, 225, 264, 301, 401, 450 ff.  
*Ynglingatal*, poem of Thiothell inn hvinveraki, 45, 178, 261, 364, 367, 456.  
 Ynglings, the (royal race), 361, 401.  
 Yngvi (-Freyr), *see* Ingvi.  
 Yrmenlaf, 49.  
 Yrsa, 23, 79 ff., 265 ff., 311 ff., 377 f., 454 ff., 467 et passim.  
 ZEPALAND Period, *see* Hinningsøje Period.

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